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Opinion

Ahmed Al-Jarallah

Editor-in-Chief, the Arab Times

THE recent statement of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef, praising His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a blessing for this time, is a recognized truth and an example for all of Kuwait and the region.

This sentiment arises when reflecting on the na-

tion's struggles and decline in all sectors since 1963, a period marked by the frequent misuse of democracy. Intended for Kuwait's betterment and progress, democracy was, for many decades, reduced to a series of conflicts between successive governments and the National Assembly.

For several decades, this Assembly often turned into tribal, sectarian and regional blocs, losing its essential function as a body for legislation, governmental oversight and correcting practical errors.

The atmosphere in Abdullah Al-Salem Hall deteriorated a lot, with freedom of expression turning

into personal attacks and vulgarity aimed at individuals, officials, and even friendly and allied nations.

This behavior had detrimental consequences, leading to widespread discord among the populace and negatively affected local social relations and regional and international positions.

The economic sphere also suffered. Vital legislation was frequently rejected by certain parliamentary blocs or groups of MPs who prioritized their narrow self-interests.

Also, local investments were dominated by narrow commercial interests, effectively barring for-

eign investment.

The dissolution of the National Assembly led to the shelving of more than 400 laws, as the pursuit of power and resources overshadowed the strategic priorities of the country.

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Central Bank decision praised

Experts predict Kuwait market boost after rate reduction move

By Najeh Bilal

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: After the Central Bank of Kuwait announced two days ago the 25-basis-point reduction in the key interest rate (discount rate) from 3.75 percent to 3.50 percent, the newspaper raised the looming question about the repercussions of this move on the local market.

Two experts in the financial and economic fields supported the decision, indicating that it will have a positive impact on both the national economy and consumers. They explained that interest rate reductions are typically accompanied by other measures, such as the withdrawal of deposited funds and their release into the market.

They added that borrowing rates from banks tend to increase due to the lower interest, which encourages the implementation of many projects. They believe this move will attract

more foreign investments, emphasizing that interest rate cuts play a crucial role in adjusting inflation, which directly impacts consumers, as high rates harm those with fixed income.

Economic analyst Sultan Al-Jazzaf affirmed that this is a positive move, because most economies are linked to the American economy and the dollar, hence, Kuwait, along with other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, decided to reduce the interest rate to align with the action of the US Federal Reserve.

He said there are many significant advantages of this move, as it will encourage many citizens to invest in the market, instead of keeping their money in banks. "This, in itself, will break the economic slowdown and stimulate the market," he explained.

He pointed out that the reduction will increase borrowing from banks to launch more projects in the private sector.

He confirmed that this openness will positively affect the resolution of the unemployment problem by encouraging the implementation of projects in the private sector. He said local and foreign investments will witness higher growth.

He stated that this step will help the global economy, particularly the US economy, emerge from the slowdown, which will positively affect global financial markets.

He also highlighted the role of this reduction in balancing inflation rates in Kuwait and other global economies.

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KD 3.2 mln contract greenlit for Medical City Consultancy

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: In confirmation of a recent report published by the daily under the headline "KD 3.2 million for Medical City Consultant Practice in Sabah Al-Ahmad City", the Ministry of Public Works has received approval from the State Audit Bureau to proceed with the contracting process after review and auditing.

The ministry had previously obtained approval from the Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT) to award the contract to the financially best bid that met the required technical specifications.

The contract covers consultancy work for the design and technical studies related to the construction of a 500-bed general hospital on a 292,217,830-square-meter site in the city. The project aims to provide a high level of healthcare and medical services using the latest medical equipment for reducing

patient waiting times and minimizing the need for treatment abroad.

The project includes constructing the hospital building, which will house patient wards and all departments, as well as a dental services building, outpatient clinics, and facilities for physiotherapy, rehabilitation, emergency care, dialysis, same-day surgery, blood transfusion, and palliative care.

Meanwhile, CAPT has completed its review of the tender for the construction of the entrances and exits to Jaber Al-Ahmad City. Six companies competed for the tender, with one company disqualified under Article 45 of the Public Tenders Law.

According to sources, the project aims to build the city's entrances and exits at sites 1 and 2, protect oil sector facilities, and provide associated services such as stormwater drainage, lighting, traffic control systems, signage, and safety and collision barriers.

Newswatch

PACI stresses secure ID use

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) has urged users of the electronic civil ID app "Kuwait Mobile ID" not to accept any authentication requests unless they result from an action initiated by the user, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

PACI emphasized the importance of verifying the service provider's information and the purpose of the authentication request before accepting it, to ensure information security and safe usage.

Meanwhile, Al-Anba daily reported that PACI highlighted the verification levels available in the "Kuwait Mobile ID" app. It explained that the verification levels in the app vary depending on the registration method chosen by the user when creating their account, with each level granting access to a range of services and features within the app.

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9 held in fuel smuggling op

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): The Ministry of Interior declared on Saturday that its personnel burst into a farm in Al-Abdali used for storing and smuggling diesel out of the country.

The operation was carried out under the director supervision by the Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud Al-Sabah, and attended by Major General Hamed Al-Dawas, the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Security Affairs.

The MoI personnel, having obtained a warrant to storm the site, acted upon information indicating that the diesel was kept in containers at the farm.

Up to 33 containers loaded were diesel were seized and confiscated, the ministry statement said, adding that the forces also seized pumps and arrested nine people including a citizen suspected of masterminding the illegal activities.

Intermittent fog to haunt coming days



KUNA photo

Kuwait's skyscrapers pierce through a thick blanket of fog on Friday evening, creating a surreal cityscape.

Kuwait records varied rainfall, Abdalli tops charts

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Meteorological Department, which is part of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA), recorded varying rainfall levels throughout the country on Thursday. The highest rainfall was recorded in Al-Abdali at 24.3 mm, while the lowest was in Jahra at 5.4 mm, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The acting Director of the Meteorological Department, Dhirar Al-Ali, told the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) on Friday that Kuwait had been affected over the past few days by a low-pressure system accompanied by

a deep upper-level trough, resulting in rainfall. The rain was occasionally thundery and varied in intensity in different areas.

The department's automatic weather monitoring stations recorded 10.9 mm in Al-Rabia, 10.1 mm in Al-Abraq Farm, 9 mm in Ras Al-Salmiya, 8.4 mm at Kuwait International Airport, and 8.3 mm in Al-Wafra.

Amid the prevailing weather conditions, Kuwait Airways announced Friday that it may temporarily divert some inbound flights to Kuwait International Airport. In a statement posted on its official X account, the airline said it would notify passengers of any schedule or flight changes through the contact details printed on their tickets.

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PAHW, Korea team 'explore' strategic housing partnership

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): Kuwait's Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) welcomed Saturday a Korea Land and Housing Corporation (LH) team for negotiations to develop land for investment within the South Saad Al-Abdullah residential city project under a bilateral MoU.

In a press statement issued on Saturday, the authority said the meeting, attended by Acting Director General Eng.

Rashid Al-Anzi and his counterpart from LH, was part of a series of coordination meetings aimed at strengthening international partnerships, exchanging expertise and supporting housing development plans.

In addition, these efforts are intended to accelerate progress in new residential cities and enhance their readiness for implementation.

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KUNA photo

Meeting in progress.

Kuwait launches new committee to battle drugs

By Mohammed Al-Enezi

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Dr. Yahya Al-Rashidi, Director of the Department of Islamic Studies and Quranic Sciences for the Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorates, announced the formation of the Drug Awareness Committee, with himself appointed as its head. The committee's mission is to shed light on the harsh realities of all types of drugs, whether naturally derived or chemically synthesized.

In a press statement, Dr. Al-Rashidi stressed that the committee reflects the Ministry of Islamic Affairs' dedication to active participation and continuous interaction with society and its institutions.

He emphasized the ministry's preventative and therapeutic role that focuses on instilling ethical values and providing moral and spiritual support, which are important pillars in the journey toward recovery from addiction.

Dr. Al-Rashidi revealed that 190 male and female participants attended the forum, and 147 teachers successfully completed two training programs.

Meanwhile, Vice Chairman of the Drug Awareness Committee, Ahmed Raefe, stated that the committee has commenced coordination meetings to launch

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NBK Run reinforces its status as Kuwait's largest sporting event



Zain Kuwait clinches three prestigious awards for its leadership in 5G-Advanced, network experience, and digital transformation



ABK announces successful completion of its KD 30 million Tier 2 bond issuance

Prayer Timings			
Fajr	05:08	Asr	14:32
Sunrise ..	06:33	Maghrib ..	16:51
Zohr	11:42	Isha	18:13

Local

Weather			
Expected weather for next 24 hrs:			
By Day: Mild and partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate northeasterly wind, with speeds of 08-28 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.			
By Night: Rather cold to cold			
Station	Max Exp	Min Rec	
Kuwait City	21	13	

Kuwait Airport	23	11
Abdaly	22	10
Jahra	22	14
Failaka Island	19	10
Salmiyah	20	16
Ahmadi	20	10
Nuwaisib	21	12
Wafra	21	11



HH the Amir HH the Crown Prince HH the Prime Minister

Leadership congrats Kenya Pres. on Independence Day

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent on Friday a cable to President of Kenya Dr. William Samoei Ruto, congratulating him on his country's Independence Day.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished President Ruto good health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity for Kenya and its friendly people.

Crown Prince

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent on Friday a cable to President of Kenya Dr. William Samoei Ruto, congratulating him on his country's Independence Day.

Prime Minister

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah sent on Friday a cable to President of Kenya Dr. William Samoei Ruto, congratulating him on his country's Independence Day.

You, ... then others in drive to keep Kuwait safe, clean

Role of schools crucial to raise awareness: Al-Tabtabaei

By Fares Ghaleb
Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Minister of Social Affairs, Family, and Childhood Affairs Dr. Amthal Al-Huwailah emphasized that the “This Is Your Role” campaign was launched with a clear national vision that preserving Kuwait’s environment, cleanliness, and values is a shared responsibility.

She said individual action, combined with societal cooperation, is essential to achieving this collective goal, adding that the campaign is in line with the political leadership's directive for every citizen to understand and fulfill their role in the nation's well-being.

The minister, speaking at the campaign's closing ceremony, which was held under her patronage, and in the presence of the Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei, explained that the campaign is more than a temporary event. It is a comprehensive national project designed to instill awareness and positive behavior, transforming the concept of responsibility from a mere slogan into a daily practice in schools, homes, streets, and government institutions.

She highlighted the remarkable national cooperation that contributed to the campaign's success, including the enthusiastic participation of students supported by their educational institutions and the allocation of resources by various government agencies.

Dr. Al-Huwailah also noted the active involvement and oversight by the governors, which provided crucial on-the-ground support and significantly strengthened the campaign's impact.

She commended initiatives of the private sector, describing them as a practical demonstration of patriotism, and praised the essential involvement of volunteer teams, whose contributions spanned from planning to implementation, adding that these teams were instrumental in organizing events, promoting the campaign's message, and turning it into a tangible reality, thereby upholding and continuing Kuwait's tradition of impactful volunteerism within society.

Meanwhile, Minister of Education Jalal Al-Tabtabaei affirmed the Ministry of Education's commitment to cultivating a generation that is aware of and dedicated to its national role, starting in schools.

He explained that updated educational programs have been designed to incorporate concepts of social responsibility, community service, cooperation, giving, and volunteerism, making these values an integral part of students' daily experiences and behaviors.

The widespread participation in the “This Is Your Role” campaign confirms the success of the Ministry of Social Affairs' initiative. The ministry launched this campaign based on the belief that preserving the environment reflects deeply rooted national values and highlights the role of every individual as a key partner in enhancing Kuwait's standing and maintaining its positive image.

Al-Tabtabaei emphasized that educational curricula place strong focus on environmental awareness. This includes integrating topics that promote the conservation of land and marine environments, encourage responsible resource use, and foster understanding of environmental pollution and its potential solutions. The curricula also emphasize clean energy and sustainability. This strategic approach is guided by the conviction that environmental protection is a shared national responsibility, beginning with individual awareness and culminating in collective societal action.



Al-Huwailah



Kuwaiti and forces from the GCC countries charge after landing on a beach during the exercise.

Joint drill reinforces GCC resolve to counter threats from the sea

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): Kuwait's Naval Force and their peers from other GCC member states concluded on Thursday the joint maritime exercise, Union 25, with the participation of the GCC Secretariat.

In a press release after the end of the exercise, Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah said unified action and integrated efforts among GCC

forces are a main pillar of boosting naval security in the region.

Strengthening collective defense potential comes to materialize GCC leaders' vision, he added, commending sincere efforts exerted by naval forces participating in, preparing and carrying out the exercise, the minister, who attended and patronized the event, added.

Meanwhile, Chief of General Staff of Kuwait's Armed Forces Lt. Gen. Khaled Al-Sharaian expressed appreciation to the professional level shown during conducting the exercise.

Varied scenarios and testing command systems as well as dealing with challenges have contributed to boosting efficiency of the participating naval groups.

He noted that the aim of exercise was to manage joint operations and planning to enhance and develop GCC joint military integration and cooperation.

The Union 25 is part of a chain of joint Gulf exercises to aiming develop combat efficiency, and bolster cooperation and integration in carrying out and managing common naval duties and upgrade readiness of defending territorial water and protecting GCC national interests in economic water.

Other Voices

Where to escape?

By Ahmad alsarraf

One of the most difficult challenges facing people whose religion forbids the consumption or use of pork products is the widespread presence of pork-derived substances in food, industrial, pharmaceutical, medical, surgical, cosmetic, and even military products. This makes completely avoiding their consumption or use nearly impossible.

Reading labels or researching each product individually is often ineffective, as is trying to decipher the coded symbols and technical terminology used to identify pork-derived ingredients.

Even limiting consumption to products labeled “Halal” or “Kosher” does not necessarily guarantee their authenticity. Such claims are not always honest, and even products that are supposedly subject to religious oversight can be manipulated.

For some, it may be easier to stop eating out or choose plant-based products made from sources such as soy, corn, and vegetable glycerin, especially given the growing availability of alternatives in global markets.

However, this requires huge sacrifices that few people can realistically make. As a result, completely avoiding pig-derived products is nearly impossible, particularly when it comes to non-food items such as leather goods, hairbrushes, shoes, and, most importantly, essential medications.

In a major scientific breakthrough, researchers have successfully converted a pig kidney from blood type A to type O and transplanted it. According to a report published in the journal Nature Biomedical Engineering, this advancement could shorten organ transplant waiting times and save the lives of many patients.

This discovery is particularly important for patients with type O blood, who make up more than half of those on kidney transplant waiting lists. These patients can receive organs only from donors with the same blood type, while kidneys from type O donors can be transplanted into recipients of all other blood types.

Pig products and their derivatives are widely used in the medical and cosmetic industries, as well as in some military and other sectors. Gelatin extracted from pig skin or bones is commonly used in the production of pharmaceutical capsules, and insulin derived from pig pancreas has been used to treat diabetes.

Certain enzymes, such as pepsin and trypsin, which are often extracted from pigs, are used in some digestive medications or as additives in the pharmaceutical industry.

Pig skin is used in surgical procedures as burn grafts when suitable human alternatives are unavailable. Pork-derived substances are also used in the production of some vaccines and medical supplements. In addition, collagen and elastin are extracted from pig bones and skin.

Animal fatty acids are used in skin creams, toothpastes, soaps, perfumes, some waxes and refined oils, lipsticks, polishes, and skin oils. They are also used in the production of sweets, yogurt, cheese, chocolate, biscuits, and ice cream.

Lard is used in the manufacture of baked goods, cakes, and pastries.

Pig fat, or tallow, is used in lubricants, machine parts, and in the production of certain types of glue, adhesives, and industrial paints.

Pig ash or bones are used in refining some sugars, manufacturing glossy paper and printing inks, and even in certain tire materials and industrial belts.

Pig hair is used to make paintbrushes and coloring brushes due to its durability. Pork products are also used in livestock feed, adding further challenges for those who follow religious dietary restrictions.

In addition, pork fat is used to coat ammunition and bullets and to clean weapons and ammunition.

Faced with this wide range of uses, a Muslim may feel overwhelmed and wonder “Where is the refuge?”.



alsarraf



Kuwaiti and other teams on the podium.

Kuwait wins first position at 2025 World Robot Olympiad

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Kuwait University participated in the 2025 World Robot Olympiad, held in Singapore, where Kuwait won first place in the category of Best Implementation of an Educational Program for Community Empowerment in the fields of robotics and Artificial Intelligence.

According to a press release issued by Kuwait University, the competition witnessed wide participation from teams representing more than 100 countries worldwide. Kuwait University was represented by a team from the College of Education.

Dr. Suad Al-Furaih and Dr. Abdullah Al-Failakawi contributed to the design and implementation of the educational programs submitted in the winning category, providing academic and pedagogical support to the national teams and enhancing Kuwait's representation at the global event.

The university also gained recognition in the international arbitration arena at the Olympiad, with student Abdulaziz Faisal Al-Saeed from the College of Science's Department of Mathematics serving as an international judge. Al-Saeed participated in managing several competitions, reflecting the organizing committee's confidence in the capabilities of Kuwait's talented youth.

The organizers of the World Robot Olympiad praised the scientific and academic contributions of the university representatives, noting their role in the success of the event and in raising the profile of Kuwait's participation.

This participation is part of the university's commitment to supporting students and faculty in global scientific competitions and events, enhancing its role in promoting robotics and Artificial Intelligence, and empowering society with future skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Training curbs explosives smuggling

‘Sahel’ has become top national tool for combating corruption

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (Agencies): The official spokesperson for the unified government e-services application “Sahel”, Yousef Kazim, affirmed that the Sahel app has emerged as a leading national tool for combating corruption, promoting transparency, and preventing the misappropriation of public funds.

He explained that the Sahel app plays a crucial role in reducing waste and creating good governance within government entities. By digitizing a large number of transactions, the app enhances administrative efficiency, minimizes administrative errors, and allows for real-time tracking of the status of official transactions.

In his speech at the Fifth Integrity Forum under the theme “Anti-Corruption Strategies: From Assessing Achievements to Building the Future”, organized by the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the occasion of International Anti-Corruption Day, Kazim emphasized the pivotal role of the Sahel app in curbing corruption.

He explained that the “Sahel” app has effectively eliminated the exploitation of public office, favoritism, and nepotism in government transactions. With all procedures now fully digital and free from human intervention, opportunities to influence or expedite transactions outside official channels have been closed. This digital transformation has strengthened public trust in government institutions and contributed to an important pillar of the national development plan focused on efficient and effective government administration.

He highlighted the app's success in processing over 120 million government transactions, noting that it now serves three million users and provides services through 42 government entities.

Kazim emphasized, “This reflects the app's effectiveness in promoting integrity and good governance within government institutions by maintaining a clear digital record for every transaction, increasing trust between citizens and government agencies, and ensuring fair access to services without discrimination. The growing number of entities joining Sahel reflects the state's commitment to developing an advanced digital system that combats corruption, enhances service quality, and continuously introduces new features to increase transparency and simplify citizens' interactions with government services.”

Meanwhile, as part of ongoing cooperation between the General Administration of Customs (GAC) and the Ministry of Interior to strengthen national security and enhance the efficiency of personnel at customs ports, a specialized training course for customs inspectors was held under the title “Security Inspection to Combat Explosives Smuggling”.

The three-day course took place at the General Administration of Special Security Forces in Sulaibiya from December 7 to 9. Participants received both theoretical and practical training on smuggling detection methods, handling hazardous materials, and modern security inspection techniques used to prevent the smuggling of explosives.

The course aimed to improve inspectors' capabilities, develop their skills in identifying potential threats, and raise readiness levels in line with the highest security and safety standards. This initiative is part of GAC's ongoing efforts to enhance its operational capabilities and modernize procedures.

GAC emphasized that these joint training programs reflect the strength of its partnership with the Ministry of Interior and reinforce security coordination between the two entities to protect the nation from threats and ensure the safety of borders and customs ports.



Yousef Kazim

diwaniya

ديوانية

A DIGEST OF PUBLIC OPINION

The importance of arms in strength of a country

“IN modern history, Ukraine stands as a prominent example of a state that once held immense strategic power, only to gradually lose it under the lure of international promises and pressure from major powers,” Kuwaiti writer **Hussein Al-Rawi** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kyiv inherited a significant portion of the Soviet arsenal, making Ukraine the third-largest nuclear power in the world. At that time, Ukraine possessed approximately 1,900 nuclear warheads, along with uranium enrichment facilities and production centers, which theoretically enabled it to continue producing nuclear weapons.

“In addition to its nuclear capabilities, Ukraine boasted of having one of the world’s largest armies, with around 700,000 soldiers, placing it among the top five most powerful militaries globally in the early 1990s. Ukrainian power extended far beyond its army and nuclear weapons. Kyiv inherited the most important and valuable Soviet military and industrial facilities, including missile, tank, and heavy equipment factories, as well as Antonov, which is the world’s largest aircraft manufacturer and produced the largest cargo plane in history. The country also inherited massive power plants, including some of the largest in Europe.

“Ukraine had a huge steel and iron industry, the backbone of heavy industry, along with some of the most fertile agricultural land on the planet, earning it the title of the “breadbasket of Europe.” By the mid-1990s, the West engaged in a delicate political strategy, convincing Ukraine that its future, security, and international standing depended on joining the Western camp and relinquishing its weapons. The Americans and Europeans made a series of promises to Ukraine, most notably “guarantees of security and sovereignty” under the so-called “1994 Budapest Memorandum”, in exchange for Ukraine’s complete abandonment of its nuclear arsenal, the closure of important factories, transfer of technology, military downsizing, budget reductions, and gradual integration of its economy into Western markets.

“Kyiv agreed to these terms under immense political, media, and economic pressure, trusting the West’s assurances that it would stand by Ukraine in the face of any existential threat. However, subsequent events exposed the stark gap between promises and reality. In 2014, when Russian forces entered Crimea and seized control, Kyiv looked to the left and right, expecting the “European soldier” it had been told would defend it, or the Western military protection it had been promised. But no Western forces arrived, no direct military intervention took place, and not even a serious attempt at deterrence was made.

“Western countries limited themselves to political condemnation and the imposition of economic sanctions on Russia, while Ukraine, stripped of nuclear weapons and lacking a strong army, faced a major military power alone. The Ukrainian experience delivers a harsh lesson to all nations - Weapons are not merely tools of war, but they are the primary guarantor of independent decision-making and national security.

“A state that possesses a credible military deterrent does not rely on the promises of others, is not vulnerable to political coercion, cannot be forced into unwanted alliances, and will not be abandoned at the first test. However, a state that places its security in the hands of “written guarantees” or “declarations of friendship” is venturing into the unknown, because international relations are governed not by trust, but by power. What happened to Ukraine is not simply a political mistake, but it is a strategic lesson that will be studied for years to come.

“How can a nation that once possessed nuclear weapons, a massive army, a robust military industry, agricultural strength, and vast energy resources, within less than twenty years, become a state that must rely on others for weapons and wait for grants and military support instead of exporting them?”

Also:

“The sports community, and every Kuwaiti household, shares the same deep sorrow, a sorrow that is impossible to ignore. This is because the current state of the team does not reflect the proud history of the “Al-Azraq” (the Blue) or its fans, who have never abandoned it,” Kuwaiti writer Lawyer **Dr. Abdullah Mohammad Al-Turaji** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Despite substantial financial support and years of effort, the national team’s performance is declining instead of improving, as if participation has become a matter of simply

showing up, rather than competing or proudly raising the Kuwaiti flag. What we are witnessing is not merely a technical setback, but it is a systemic decline, with an entire structure that has lost its capacity for development. Kuwaiti football, once the beacon of the Gulf, is now struggling to find victories that restore its confidence. How did we get here? How can we accept seeing teams that were once behind us now far ahead?

“The world has changed, and sports have become an industry governed not by emotion alone, but by science, investment, and strategic planning. This raises a critical question - Why don’t we open the door for the private sector to play a central role in sports? Why don’t we allow experienced foreign investors to contribute to the development of Kuwaiti football? We need a truly professional environment, internal competition that produces players capable of representing their country, and clubs that function as institutions able to invest, develop, build academies, and nurture talent.

“Today’s sorrow is not about losing a match or being eliminated from a tournament, but it is about the loss of a sports identity that was once a source of pride for an entire nation. But despite everything that has happened, hope remains. The future demands a bold decision for rebuilding sports from the ground up, establishing clear plans for the national team, nurturing talent from a young age, integrating technology and sports sciences, and embracing true professionalism without hesitation.

“?We want a competitive national team... a team that brings joy back to our stands... a team that writes a new chapter worthy of Kuwait’s proud history. The ball is now—both literally and figuratively—in your court.”

“When Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan assumed the role of Minister of Public Works, she did not spend her time in the comfort of her elegant office. She earned her ministerial position not through her charms or looks, but through her high academic qualifications and achievements,” Kuwaiti journalist **Hassan Ali Karam** wrote for **Al-Seyassah** daily.

“Kuwait is proud of all its hard-working and qualified citizens, and its people take pride in their homeland, for advanced degrees mean little without a nation that supports and values its talented individuals. Truly successful people are quick to dedicate their knowledge and accomplishments to their country, for a person has no value without belonging to a nation. This acknowledgment is well-deserved for Minister Dr. Al-Mashaan and for every official who serves the nation with diligence, sincerity, and a heart full of love, loyalty, and devotion to Kuwait. As a poet said, “Nothing equals the homeland.”

“Kuwait deserves to hold a central place in our hearts. We belong to Kuwait, and Kuwait belongs to us. This is the lesson taught to us by the hero of liberation, His Highness Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (May God have mercy on him), and it is what we learned from the unjust invasion. When His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah delegates Minister Dr. Noura Al-Mashaan to chair the weekly Cabinet meeting on his behalf, it reflects great confidence and appreciation for her. The weekly Cabinet meeting has become a regular routine. But what comes after 31 meetings? Too often, successive meetings feel like the grinding of a millstone, going in circles but staying in the same place. Many initiatives have been launched without producing tangible results. Among these are the contracts between Kuwait and other countries, including China. Even now, after 16 years of work, the new Kuwait International Airport is not yet open.

“The government had promised citizens that the airport would open at the beginning of the new year, meaning that Kuwaitis would welcome 2026 celebrating, or at least marking the occasion, with the launch and rotation of the first wheel of the Blue Bird at the new airport. Amid the anticipation and excitement of the opening, we must not forget the pending requests for additional services at the airport. As citizens, we wait patiently, reminded of the saying, “Haste makes waste.” However, our patience is wearing thin.

“I would also like to remind the ever-smiling Minister Dr. Al-Mashaan of her statement regarding road maintenance in Qurtuba, where I live. Dear Minister, the work of the contracting company responsible for maintaining Qurtuba’s roads has stalled, with its equipment occupying the streets for two full years, and the project is still unfinished.”

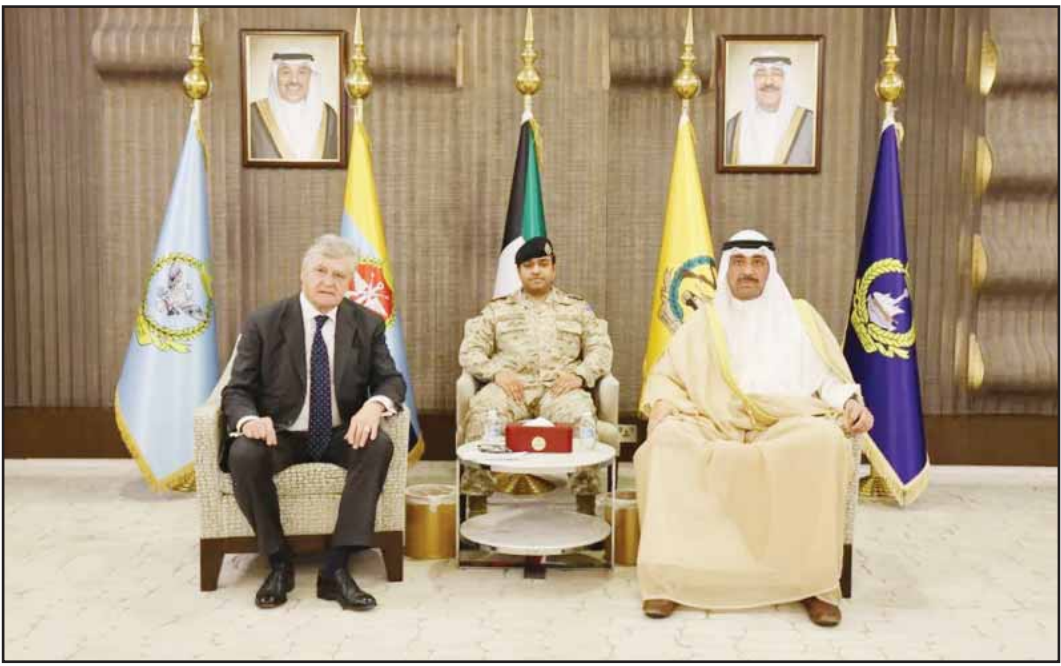
— Compiled by Simi K. Kutty



Hussein Al-Rawi



Hassan Ali Karam



KUNA photo

Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah discussed several issues of mutual interest with the French Minister of Foreign Trade, Nicolas Forissier.

Kuwait, France discuss multi-pronged issues

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah discussed, at Bayan Palace recently, several issues of mutual interest with the French Minister of Foreign Trade, Nicolas Forissier.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of France to Kuwait, Olivier Govan, the Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs, Ambassador Sadiq Maarefi, and the Head of the Armament and Equipment Authority, Brigadier General Khalifa Duaij Al-Sabah.

Fictitious deportations in expat personal vendetta

KD 500 facilitator nabbed in sting op

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: In a major operation reflecting the vigilance and determination of the security services against abuse of authority, the Abu Futaira Criminal Investigation Department arrested an officer stationed at a police post in the Capital Governorate for fabricating false charges against expatriates and preparing reports that would lead to their deportation in exchange for advance payments, reports Al-Anba daily.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the officer received KD 500 for each case, paid upfront by individuals seeking to deport expatriates out of personal animosity or revenge. He would then create fabricated reports and file fictitious violations against the victims to facilitate their deportation.

According to an informed source, the authorities, acting on reliable intelligence, staged a sting operation. An expatriate was sent as bait, claiming he wanted to deport an expatriate. As soon as the officer accepted the KD 500 in marked

bills, he was apprehended in the act. The officer was referred to the Public Prosecution, and he admitted in detail to the Public Prosecution to all charges, acknowledging that he received money in exchange for facilitating the deportation of expatriates through fabricated reports.

The relevant authorities have begun compiling a list of all cases in which he deported individuals or played a role, in order to review them and take necessary action if any wrongdoing or manipulation is proven.

The source affirmed that the ministry will not tolerate any violations, stating that “the rule of law is above all,” and that exploiting one’s position for personal gain will be met with strict measures and severe penalties.

Scores nabbed as ‘silicone fingerprints’ linger

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Although only a few months have passed since the discovery of a fingerprint forgery case at the Ministry of Justice, which led to the referral of those involved to the judiciary and carries penalties including imprisonment and the recovery of illicitly obtained funds, attempts to bypass attendance and departure systems continue to emerge from time to time, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to security sources, the Anti-Forgery and Counterfeiting De-

partment, which is part of the General Department of Criminal Investigations, uncovered a similar case at a government company in Ahmadi Governorate. The company’s management had reported suspected manipulation of attendance records using artificial (silicone) fingerprints to falsely record employee attendance.

Investigation teams conducted a thorough probe, and search and seizure operations collected physical evidence confirming the use of forged fingerprints, through which undue

professional benefits were obtained and public funds misappropriated. A number of suspects were arrested and were referred with the seized items to the Public Prosecution for legal action.

The sources affirmed that authorities will maintain a strict stance against all forms of manipulation and corruption, and any attempt to misuse public resources or violate employment regulations will face stringent measures and continuous monitoring in all government agencies.



Farwaniya Governorate photo

Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received Dr. Bader Al-Mutairi and Ali Al-Rashidi, residents of Khaitan, at his office recently to hear their concerns regarding several service-related issues.

Khaitan residents air grievances on issues

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Athbi Al-Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah received Dr. Bader Al-Mutairi and Ali Al-Rashidi, residents of Khaitan, at his office recently to hear their concerns regarding several service-related issues.

According to a press release issued by Farwaniya Governorate, the residents raised concerns about improving internal roads, enhancing transportation services, and easing traffic flow.

Governor Sheikh Athbi affirmed the governorate’s commitment to maintaining direct communication with residents and following up on the issues raised with the relevant authorities.

Drugs found on citizen wanted by ‘Jahra’ cops

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Jahra officers arrested a wanted citizen in Jahra Industrial for erratic behavior and possession of crystal meth and a pipe, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to security sources, officers from Jahra Emergency Police Department, while patrolling the area, became suspicious when they noticed a man behaving erratically, stopped him to check his details, discovered that he is a Kuwaiti citizen who was wanted by the General Directorate of Correctional Institutions, and found a bag of crystal meth along with a pipe in his possession.

The suspect was referred with the seized items to the Drugs Control General Department for necessary legal action.



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Bill ‘regulates’ worship place

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Ministry of Islamic Affairs has finalized a draft law to regulate the establishment and management of places of worship, and has sought feedback from relevant government agencies on the draft law, reports Al-Rai daily.

The proposed law aims to promote freedom of religious practice and equality among citizens, ensure transparency and objectivity in the management of places of worship, and prevent their use for political, non-religious, or profit-driven purposes. It seeks to strengthen technical, administrative, and financial oversight and regulate the activities and events held within places of worship. It also aims to enhance Kuwait’s regional and international standing.

However, its provisions do not apply to places of worship that are established and managed by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs.

The draft law includes the creation of a “Places of Worship Committee,” which will be tasked with providing guidance on the standards and regulations for establishing and managing places of worship. The committee will also develop a regulatory map of worship locations, ensuring that the number of places of worship for each religion or sect is proportionate to the actual population and density.

The draft law also requires every place of worship to open a bank account under the ministry’s supervision. Places of worship must maintain records, books, data, and electronic systems related to their activities for at least ten years, and their destruction is only permitted with prior approval from the ministry.

It includes several provisions concerning penalties that range from fines to imprisonment, and grants the Ministry of Islamic Affairs the authority to close and liquidate the assets of places of worship that violate the law, in accordance with the procedures and rules set out in the executive regulations.

The draft law requires places of worship to use their funds solely for activities that serve their intended purposes. It also includes several prohibitions, the most important of which are:

- Offending any religion, sect, or belief
- Interfering in the internal or external policies of the state or disrupting public order
- Inciting sectarian or racial strife, or promoting extremism or violence
- Organizing events or performing rituals outside places of worship without a permit
- Conducting rituals or ceremonies that harm oneself or others, or threaten health, safety, or security.
- Communicating with the diplomatic or official institutions of any country without authorization.
- Using a place of worship to interfere in the internal or external policies of other countries.

Event set for Dec 23

Ammaar Ya Kuwait to host Disability Forum

By Mohammed Ghanem

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The “Ammaar Ya Kuwait” (Prosperous Kuwait) campaign held a press conference to announce the International Day of Persons with Disabilities Forum, themed “Makers of Impact” (Influencers), scheduled for December 23.

The forum will be held under the patronage and in the presence of Sheikha Amal Al-Hamoud Al-Sabah, the campaign’s honorary president, with participation from governmental and non-governmental organizations as well as volunteer groups.

The late Khaled Yousef Al-Marzouq has been chosen as the forum’s honoree.

Nasser Al-Muhalhal, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the “Ammaar Ya Kuwait” campaign, highlighted the significance of the forum in honoring the late Khaled Yousef Al-Marzouq as a prominent figure in charitable work and humanitarian initiatives.

He emphasized the late Al-Marzouq’s significant contributions to supporting volunteer and humanitarian work in Kuwait, particularly in the social sector.

Al-Muhalhal explained that the forum will mark a new milestone in empowering people with disabilities to lead charitable and humanitarian initiatives. It will honor a group of impact-makers with disabilities in Kuwait who have achieved outstanding accomplishments at local, regional, and international levels in education, economics, sports, culture, literature, and other fields.

The forum will include panel discussions focused on volunteer work and empowering people with disabilities to participate actively in various sectors.

Meanwhile, Dr. Fahad Al-Turki, head of the media committee for the “Ammaar Ya Kuwait” campaign, highlighted the forum’s importance in showcasing the significant contributions of people with disabilities to their country’s achievements.

In addition, Dr. Abbas Al-Tarrah, head of the “Kuwaiti Trainers Without Borders” team, confirmed that more than 24 volunteer teams will participate in the forum, alongside an exhibition highlighting volunteer initiatives.

Other Voices

Food trucks and the rule of law: The reasons for Kuwait’s enforcement campaign being a legally inevitable decision

By Shaikha Aljulaibi

Attorney

For the past several years, the food truck industry in Kuwait remained somewhat unclear in terms of regulations, on one hand, it was innovative enough to attract a great number of young entrepreneurs, while on the other hand, it was not properly regulated to ensure public safety, fair competition, or provide legal certainty.

The recent crackdown on the food trucks which led to the removal of those operating in violation of the rules from the streets of various areas in the country has provoked a heated discussion among the people.

However, if we go beyond the emotional responses, we can see that the campaign was not a political move but rather a legal adjustment. This adjustment can be better understood by looking at the laws in place, and what happens when they are ignored.

The Legal Premise: A Food Truck Is Not a Right, but a Licensed Privilege According to Kuwaiti regulations, mobile food units are considered as high, risk commercial ventures, as they involve mobility, food handling, and lack of affixed infrastructure. Hence, they are regulated by three laws.

Intersection:

1. Kuwait Municipality Law No. 33 of 2016 This law is the foundation of food, truck regulation. Among its requirements it has:
 - Setting up a Municipal, approved site.
 - Respecting sanitation and waste management regulations at all times.
 - Granting inspectors the right to immediately cease operations of or remove units that are not up to

standard.

According to the provisions of the articles, it is up to the Municipality to decide whether to revoke, suspend or terminate the authorization without going through a lengthy procedure if public health or public order is at risk.

2. PAFN Law No. 112 of 2013, Kuwait’s Food Safety Constitution PAFN is the only authority that can control food safety measures. In the case of food trucks, this means:
 - Strict hygiene standards.
 - Correct storage and refrigeration.
 - Source traceability.
 - Unannounced inspections.PAFN may issue fines, bring food service operators to court for criminal charges, or work with the Municipality to discontinue the units that are unsafe.
3. Commercial Law (68/1980) & Companies Law (1/2016) These laws demand that those running food trucks should:
 - Have valid commercial licenses.
 - Maintain financial and operational records.
 - Go into legal contracts with suppliers and employees.Most significantly, a commercial license does not grant one the right to use public space. It is just one part of legality, not a substitute for municipal site approval.
4. The Enforcement Campaign: Not Abrupt, Legally Predictable The recent enforcement, according to many entrepreneurs, came as a surprise. From a legal perspective, this was not the case.

In administrative law, the regulators’ intervention is not only allowed but also mandatory when the sector in question shows a high number of violations, unauthorized locations, improper food handling, or misuse of commercial



Shaikha Aljulaibi

licenses.

Carrying on with non, compliance means that the regulators breach their own legal duties. Municipal teams found that violations were repeated:

- Vehicles parked in residential or heavily trafficked areas which were banned,
- Food being prepared without the required hygiene standards,
- Operations being run only on a commercial license while a site permit was missing,
- Trucks changing their locations daily so that they were not able to be inspected.

The enforcement campaign was an implementation of a statute, not a decision in the area of public law when viewed from that perspective.

5. The Economic Argument: Market Distortion Is Corrected by Regulation From an economic point of view, unlicensed operators distort the competitive environment. While legitimate food

trucks do:

- Investments in PAFN, compliant equipment,
- Utilization of designated sites.
- Implementation of sanitation infrastructure.
- Undergoing regular inspections.

On the other hand, non, compliant trucks cut their expenses to a great extent by doing away with these requirements. This results in a market that is not fair, i.e., illegal food trucks have a faster growth rate than the legal ones, and this is a phenomenon that regulators are obligated to put an end to. By carrying out the law that is in place, Kuwait is at the same time enabling the competitive field to be fair again, and this in turn is good for entrepreneurs who are compliant as they can compete with each other on a level playing field and in a sustainable way.

6. Legal Risks for Operators Ignoring Compliance The food truck operator who decides to ignore the law and follow the illegal path is exposing himself/herself to the following risks:
 - Administrative penalties.
 - Fines.
 - Confiscation of the vehicle.
 - Suspension of the commercial activity.
 - Civil liability.
 - Lawsuits related to food poisoning or unsafe products.
 - Demand for damages caused by unsafe operations.Criminal liability Under PAFN provisions, the deliberate sale of unsafe or poorly stored food may become the grounds for the imposition of criminal sanctions. Commercial consequences Inability to keep the required records may result in license revocation by MOCI.

To sum up: non, compliance is

not a trivial matter, it is a layered legal risk.

7. A Path Forward: Regulation With Clarity, Competence, and Fairness Kuwait’s enforcement was warranted. But it takes more than strict performance to secure the future of the food, truck sector. A lawfully functioning sector needs:
 - Transparent zoning maps Entrepreneurs should be informed of the areas where they can legally work, prior to their investment.
 - Consolidated licensing steps A central system that integrates Municipality, PAFN, and MOCI approvals would make the process smoother and less confusing.
 - Preparedness for compliance through training Participation in seminars focusing on hygiene, mobile, unit requirements, and legal obligations can help to avoid unintentional breaches.
 - Regular regulatory burden assessment The idea is not to choke the spirit of entrepreneurship but to find a balance between public safety and economic innovation.

Conclusion:

The Rule of Law Is Not an Obstacle, It Is the Foundation The food, truck enforcement in Kuwait should not be considered as a move against youth entrepreneurship. It is a return to one of the fundamental legal principles:

Innovation is not possible in a legal vacuum. Economic opportunity has to go hand in hand with regulatory responsibility.

If Kuwait manages to strike a balance between the entrepreneurial energy and strict but fair regulation then not only will the food, truck sector be more compliant but also it will be more competitive, more trusted and more economically resilient than ever before.







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PAMA adopts key ‘strategic reform’

Minister of Justice and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Minors’ Affairs, Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, during the meeting.

Investment, Sharia panel approved

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (Agencies): The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Minors’ Affairs (PAMA) held its first meeting on Thursday, chaired by Minister of Justice and PAMA Board Chairman Nasser Al-Sumait, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

The meeting was attended by Vice Chairman and the acting Director General of PAMA Alia Al-Saqer, Managing Director of the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) Sheikh Saud Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Marwa Al-Jaidan, and Deputy Secretary General for Support Services at the General Secretariat of Awqaf Jenan Al-Zamel.

After Minister Al-Sumait welcomed the new members, the board discussed several strategic topics, and issued a number of decisions aimed at improving performance and enhancing service efficiency.

The board also approved the formation of the Permanent Investment Committee, which will be composed entirely of members from the KIA.

The board approved the formation of the Sharia Committee, with its members as follows:

- Fawaz Mishari Al-Kulaib as Chairman,
- Dr. Mutlaq Al-Jasser as Vice Chairman,
- Members Dr. Mohammed Al-Barrak, Dr. Essam Al-Anzi, and Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Nahedh

The board also approved additional terms and conditions for filling supervisory positions within PAMA.

The Director General of PAMA has been

authorized to issue electronic invitation notification forms and distribute them to all departments for implementation.

The Board of Directors affirmed its commitment to advancing development, enhancing trust, and improving operational efficiency.

It emphasized its keenness to move forward in fulfilling its noble mission of serving minors and those under PAMA’s care, under the patronage of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and with the guidance of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah.

The Minister of Justice and Chairman of the Public Authority for Minors’ Affairs (PAMA), Counselor Nasser Al-Sumait, has issued a directive requiring individuals whose guardianship has ended to notify the authority within two weeks, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to the directive, notifications can be submitted via the “Sahel” application or by visiting PAMA headquarters, in accordance with Article 13 of the authority’s founding law.

The directive instructs former guardians to claim their funds using approved electronic channels, including the “Kuwait Mobile ID” app, Sahel app, email, or SMS, in coordination with the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI). If electronic notification is not possible, an official notice will be issued. If that also fails, publication in the official gazette will serve as notification. The notification is considered effective from the date of receipt or publication.

The decision also tasks the Director General with issuing and circulating the necessary forms to all PAMA departments for implementation. The directive is effective immediately and repeals any previous conflicting decisions.

MoHE seeks Cultural Attaché

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research announced the opening of applications for the position of Cultural Attaché in several Arab and foreign countries, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

Undersecretary of the ministry, Dr. Bader Al-Basiri, stated that applications can be submitted through the ministry’s

official website starting Thursday, December 11 until Sunday, December 21 at 11:00pm.

Dr. Al-Basiri explained that the position is open to Kuwaiti citizens holding a PhD who are faculty members with the rank of “Assistant Professor” or higher at a public sector university or the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET).



A photo of the meeting.

Australian University photo

Officials discuss workforce development

AU hosts maritime roundtable to advance Kuwait’s seafaring future

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Australian University (AU) hosted a high-level maritime roundtable at its campus, bringing together senior representatives from Kuwait’s key maritime organizations to discuss future needs, training pathways, and collaborative development of the nation’s maritime workforce.

The meeting was chaired by Eng. Sager AlSharhan, Assistant to the President for Support Services at AU, who welcomed participants and emphasized AU’s commitment to supporting Kuwait’s strategic sectors through academic and professional training programs. Attendees included officials from the General Directorate of Coast Guard, Kuwait Ports Authority, Kuwait Oil Tanker Company, Kuwait Oil Company, and the Ministry of Defense, as well as AU’s Maritime Department leadership team.

Attendees at the meeting included: Naval Colonel Musaed Abdul Salam Al Shatti, Assistant Director General of the General Directorate of Coast Guard; Colonel Abdulrahman AlAwadhi, Training Programs Planning and Evaluation Department; Colonel Majid AlShukri, Head of the Seafarers Affairs Section, Maritime Transport Department; Colonel Staff Abdulaziz Mohammed AlNoori, Head of the Study Leave Division at the Ministry of Defense; Naval Lieutenant Colonel Staff Meshari AlHamad, Senior

Training Officer at the Ministry of Defense; Army Captain Fahad Nasser AlAmir, Ministry of Defense; Captain Anwar Boufein, Director of Fleet Personnel Affairs Group at the Kuwait Oil Tanker Company; Captain Eissa Al Ayyar, Team Leader of Port Operations II, Marine Operations Group at the Kuwait Oil Company; Mr. Shamlan AlHasawi, Director of the Training and Research Department at the Kuwait Ports Authority; Captain Abdullah AlSaeed, Head of the Marine Pilots Section at the Kuwait Ports Authority; Mr. Abdullah Shams Al Din, Manager of Maritime Technical at AU; and Captain Liam Toner, Senior manager of Maritime Operations and Quality at AU

Discussions focused on enhancing cooperation between government, industry, and academia to align training programs with Kuwait’s maritime needs. AU presented its existing and proposed academic pathways, designed to meet international standards while supporting national workforce requirements.

Representatives from all organizations expressed strong support for continued collaboration, and joint efforts to raise awareness of maritime careers among Kuwaiti youth. AU concluded the meeting by thanking all partners for their commitment to strengthening Kuwait’s maritime future and agreed to continue working closely to accelerate program approvals and sector-wide development.

French Business Council spurs growth in Kuwait-France trade

Minister Forissier highlights stronger investment

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): French Minister of Foreign Trade Nicolas Forissier extolled on Thursday the launch of French Business Council, expected to play a key role in boosting trade relations between the two countries.

Speaking to KUNA in a statement during his official visit to Kuwait, Forissier commended the solid and long-standing relations between Kuwait and France in various domains, including education, economy, finance and more.

He expressed his satisfaction with the establishment of the follow-up group on bilateral ties, formed after the July 2025 meeting aimed at supporting the development of economic co-operation between the two sides.

Forissier affirmed that the upcoming opening of the French group’s office in Kuwait reflects the steady growth in investment and economic relations.

He also expressed pleasure over the remarkable growth in bilateral ties following His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah’s visit to France in July 2025.

He said France remains committed to bolstering this partnership and translating it into ambitious and innovative projects to benefit both sides, with the approach of marking the 65th anniversary of diplomatic relations due in 2026.

There are about 800 French nationals reside in Kuwait who contribute to strengthening bilateral relations, in addition to the large number of Kuwaitis who visit France annually, he stated.

Forissier said he met with Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah and some senior state officials.

He commended Kuwait’s economic transformation plans and Kuwait Vision 2035, following his meeting with Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalifa Al-Ojail, stressing that French companies are ready to contribute to these aspirations.

In addition, the French minister affirmed his government’s support for French companies in aviation and ports sectors in a manner that contributes to developing Kuwait’s strategy for the regional linkage.

This was discussed during a meeting with Minister of Defense Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Sabah and Chairman of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation Sheikh Humoud Mubarak Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, welcoming the



KUNA photo

The Minister of Information and Culture honors the French Minister of Foreign Trade.

signing of a memorandum of understanding last Friday between the two sides to boost fraternal bonds.

Forissier also highlighted France’s readiness to expand bilateral investment flows in promising and creative sectors of mutual benefit, including energy transition, semiconductors, space, artificial intelligence and digital technologies.

After meeting with Minister of Health Dr. Ahmad Al-Awadhi, the minister voiced his satisfaction with cooperation in sharing expertise in managing hospitals and training healthcare workers in Kuwait.

Accompanied by Minister of Information and Culture, and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi, the French minister visited the production facility of the French company, Vectracom, the partner of Ejabi Sultan Communications Group.

Trade volume between France and Kuwait hit USD 3.29 billion in 2023, making Kuwait’s fourth-largest European partner, with wide French corporate activity in the fields of energy, construction and infrastructure.

Minister of Information, Culture and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Abdurrahman Al-Mutairi held talks Thursday with visiting French Minister for Foreign Trade Nicolas Forissier on strengthening bilateral cooperation in the fields of media, culture and technology.

During their meeting, the two ministers reviewed the deep-rooted relations between the two nations.

They affirmed the importance of expanding partnerships, particularly in media, content creation, modern technical infrastructure, investment opportunities, intellectual property protection and support for creative industries.

The two ministers toured the digital television archiving project carried out by the Ministry of Information in cooperation with a specialized French company, one of the largest digitization initiatives in Kuwait’s government media sector.

The meeting was attended by French Ambassador to Kuwait Olivier Gauvin, the accompanying delegation and senior officials from the Ministry of Information.

Minister Al-Mutairi presented a commemorative shield to Minister Forissier.

The archiving project aims to renovate, digitize and catalog historic cinematic films and magnetic television tapes of Kuwait TV, according to the highest international standards.

It includes developing an advanced search and retrieval system and establishing modern platforms to safeguard media materials and make them accessible to content creators and researchers, in line with the ministry’s plan to modernize its digital infrastructure and preserve Kuwait’s decades-old television heritage.

Continued from Page 1

Indeed, the

While the important legislation remained untouched, other laws were passed primarily for the benefit of the Members of Parliament (MPs), electoral figures and powerful individuals.

Moreover, international agreements and projects were subjected to the self-serving interests of MPs.

These representatives rejected agreements that did not offer personal advantages, resulting in increased regional and international wariness toward Kuwait.

The assessment of Sheikh Fahad Al-Yousef is correct: His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad initiated a genuine revolution in political, social and economic spheres. This is evident in the growing stability of the ministerial position, which is now yielding positive results.

This transformation is the direct outcome of a leadership committed to restoring the prestige of the State, reinforcing governance, and providing stringent oversight. Such guidance is crucial for the pursuit of legislative and project initiatives that are beneficial for Kuwait and its citizens.

Within two years since His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad assumed power, there has been remarkable progress in resolving a plethora of perennial issues.

The important files addressed include, but are not limited to, citizenship, forged certificates, falsified disability claims, road infrastructure improvements, thefts in cooperative societies, exceptional pensions, monopolization of tenders, price gouging, and non-compliance with specifications in projects.

In addition, he focused on economic partnership with various countries and international companies.

Many of these matters were stalled or deliberately shelved by successive legislatures, often referred to investigative committees solely for the purpose of being buried.

Past examples include commissions related to arms deals and major projects like the Dow Chemical deal.

In contrast, investigations are now underway, files are being reopened, and officials implicated in wrongdoings are facing trial and imprisonment.

The previous statement that nations can become so weak, one might despair of salvation, simply underscores the inevitability of change.

Therefore, fate provided us with a leader whose main goal is to serve the country and restore its preeminent status.

To achieve this, the Cabinet must diligently execute His Highness the Amir’s directives in all sectors, while upholding the principles of justice established by the architect of this decision and revolution.

An Arabic proverb reminds us: Descending into a valley is easy, but the journey back up, the return to the correct path, necessitates greater strength and resolve.

Indeed, some past decisions were ill-advised, leading to opposition. Similarly, certain measures may have displeased those who did not benefit from them, driven by political differences or private commercial interests.

These decisions and steps must be reviewed and reassessed to ensure they

serve the interests of everyone.

The Cabinet must follow roadmap for Kuwait’s future, laid down by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad in his inaugural speech on Dec 20, 2023.

In that 2023 address, His Highness’ speech was a sharp critique of the then National Assembly and government.

He stated “we have not witnessed any change or course of correction from you (the National Assembly and the government at the time). On the contrary, the matter has gone even further, as you have cooperated and united in harming the interests of the country and its people.”

This moment marked a critical juncture in Kuwaiti political history. It was disappointing that neither party seemed to have learned from the nation’s decades of experience.

The expectation was for the democratic process to reach full maturity, but regrettably, this did not occur.

This history serves as a stern warning today, ensuring the current government remains on the correct path.

The reforms initiated by His Highness the Amir two years ago have started to show signs of progress and decisive action, which are underpinned by a clear vision and strategic plan from the Council of Ministers.

The anniversary of Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad’s accession to the throne falls on a Friday, coinciding with the day he announced and implemented measures to suspend certain articles of the Constitution, including the National Assembly, which was identified as an impediment to national progress.

Furthermore, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior previously affirmed that the Amir is leading this current phase. His Highness, who is in charge of the State of Kuwait, gave assurance that no one will face injustice.

Intermittent

It also urged travelers to contact customer service via 171 within Kuwait, +965 2434 5555 from abroad, or through WhatsApp at +965 1802 050 for assistance. The carrier thanked passengers for their cooperation during weather-related disruptions.

Meanwhile, dense fog covered most cities across Kuwait on Friday, transforming the morning skyline as skyscrapers appeared to rise above thick cloud layers. The striking scenes drew considerable attention from photographers capturing the rare atmospheric phenomenon.

Meteorological forecasts indicate that humid and foggy conditions will persist through late Friday and early Saturday, with horizontal visibility dropping below 1,000 meters and potentially reaching zero in some areas.

Al-Ali added that Kuwait is currently under the influence of high-altitude air masses from the west, bringing cool and moist conditions that will maintain fog formation during nighttime and early morning hours. Visibility is expected to improve gradually during the day Saturday, though fog may continue to appear intermittently in the coming days.

Temperatures are forecast to range between 19°C and 22°C during the day and 7°C to 10°C at night, according to the department.

PAHW, Korea

The authority noted that South Saad Al-Abdullah City is one of the largest strategic housing projects, given its vast expandable area and vital location, which offers promising investment opportunities for both the public and private sectors.

The project also plays a key role in providing thousands of housing units and supporting the state’s plans to meet growing housing demand.

The medium verification level requires manual data entry and provides features including civil ID card verification, card verification, and a government document wallet.

The high verification level, which is the most commonly used, involves scanning the civil ID card using NFC technology and provides features such as civil ID card verification, a government document wallet, card verification, and authentication.

The highest verification level is used at self-service kiosks and includes civil ID card verification, a government document wallet, card verification, authentication, and electronic signatures for relevant categories and sectors.

Kuwait launches

a new awareness campaign in line with the Ministry of Islamic Affairs’ objectives for its establishment.

Raafe explained that the committee’s goals include conducting awareness courses and workshops to train teachers, organizing lectures in collaboration with the Ministry of Education at Kuwait University, private universities, and youth centers under the Public Authority for Youth, and arranging field visits for committee members and trained teachers to the Drug Control General Department, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and addiction treatment centers under the Ministry of Health.

Experts predict

He clarified that the interest rate reduction is not linked to oil production and prices, as it incentivizes oil companies, such as Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and other international oil companies, to expand their operations due to lower borrowing costs.

Meanwhile, Dr. Manal Al-Kandari, an economic expert and former secretary of the Transparency Association, stated that the reduction of the discount rate is aimed at supporting economic activity in Kuwait.

She explained that reducing borrowing costs prompts individuals and companies to inject more liquidity into the market, thus, increasing spending.

She pointed out that this step aims to maintain monetary stability while supporting growth in light of global economic developments, which require a flexible response from fiscal and monetary policies in Kuwait.

She said this decision confirms the commitment of the Central Bank of Kuwait to adopt well-considered policies in line with the conditions of each economic phase, ensuring the protection of the local economy from potential shocks, strengthening the banking sector, and supporting the economic development of the country.

She added this move maintains the stability of the national economy, preventing it from being affected by the decision of the US Federal Reserve.

She disclosed “this step will preserve liquidity levels in local banks, as interest rates play a crucial role in shaping financial and economic markets in general, encouraging increased consumer spending and mitigating the effects of recession. It will increase the volume of foreign investments in the country, leading to growth in foreign investment in the local market.”

On the sectors that will benefit from the interest rate reduction, she cited trade, industry, international shipping, automobiles, and wholesale and retail trade.

She said the local real estate sector will be the most active as a result of the interest rate cut due to increased demand for property purchases and incentives for real estate companies and individuals to borrow for construction purposes, thereby, boosting activity in the contracting sector and the building materials market.

She stated that the interest rate cut will also revitalize the local and global gold markets, as gold is considered a safe asset that appreciates positively, benefiting consumers when they need to sell.

She pointed out that private companies’ profits are booming due to lower interest rates, resulting in reduced borrowing costs. “This encourages companies to borrow more to expand their operations in local and promising markets, creating numerous job opportunities,” she elaborated.

She said the interest rate cut leads to a balance in inflation rates, preventing those with limited fixed income from being negatively impacted by the rising prices of basic necessities like food and clothing. “Simultaneously, it reduces spending on non-essential and essential goods, leading to market stagnation that forces some shops to close due to their inability to pay rent and employee wages. Therefore, carefully set interest rates are crucial for controlling inflation, especially since companies raise prices in response to rising costs and the demands of import and export activities,” she added.

- Advantages of the interest rate cut:
- Balance inflation rates
 - Protect the local economy from potential shocks
 - Strengthen the banking sector
 - Stimulate industrial sectors
 - Revitalize buying and selling activities
 - Encourage investment in markets
 - Enhance borrowing from banks due to reduced costs

Academic partnership recognized

India’s envoy inaugurates Indian Book Corner at CCK

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Canadian College of Kuwait (CCK) had the distinct honour of welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. Paramita Tripathi, Ambassador of India to Kuwait, who graced the campus as Chief Guest for the official inauguration of the Indian Book Corner, a cultural and educational initiative celebrating India’s rich literary heritage.

Her Excellency was formally received by the College’s ownership, executive leadership, faculty members, and students, reflecting the deep and growing educational and cultural ties between India and Kuwait.

In her address, the Ambassador commended CCK for promoting multicultural learning and global academic engagement. She highlighted the importance of strengthening educational and cultural cooperation between the two nations and noted that initiatives such as the Indian Book Corner create meaningful platforms for dialogue, intellectual growth, and cross-cultural understanding.

During the same event, Her Excellency announced the launch of a new educational initiative that will invite students in Kuwait to visit the Indian Embassy as part of a structured civic and cultural engagement program. She confirmed that the initiative will begin with students from the Canadian College of Kuwait, offering them firsthand exposure to diplomacy, international relations, and public service.

The ceremony was further strengthened by the presence of a senior delegation from Vellore Institute of Technology, represented by Dr. Seenivasan, Director – International Relations, and Dr. Raghuram, Assistant Director – International Relations. On this occasion, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Canadian College of Kuwait and Vellore Institute of Technology was for-



CCK photo

H.E. Paramita Tripathi, Ambassador of India to Kuwait, during the inauguration of the Indian Book Corner.

mally handed over to Her Excellency the Ambassador, marking the official acknowledgment of the academic partnership. The MoU aims to advance academic exchange, joint programs, innovation-led learning, and collaborative research initiatives.

Commenting on the occasion, Mr. Othman Ayman Boodai, Chairman of the Canadian College of Kuwait, stated:

“Think Global, Study Local is not a slogan for us – it is a system of preparing students in Kuwait for a world that rewards global thinking.”

Faculty members and students welcomed the dignitaries with great enthusiasm.

The event concluded with a shared resolve to build a future defined by global collaboration, academic innovation, and transformative opportunities for students.

The Canadian College of Kuwait reaffirmed its commitment to delivering globally relevant education while strengthening partnerships with internationally reputed institutions.

PAFN digitalizes health licenses

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) announced the launch of a comprehensive electronic system for issuing health licenses to establishments within the inspection and control sector, and integrating these services with the “Sahel Al-Aamal” (Easy Business) app, reports Al-Seyassah daily.

PAFN explained that the new system provides a range of electronic services designed to improve procedural efficiency and expedite workflows. These services include issuing and renewing health licenses, replacing lost or damaged licenses, and tracking the status of license applications electronically. The system enhances transparency and accuracy in transaction processing and enables beneficiaries to make electronic payments through its official website.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced on Thursday

the activation of the electronic approvals exchange system with PAFN for the 85 activities under its supervision.

In a press statement, the ministry explained that this step is part of its ongoing efforts to enhance digital transformation and improve the efficiency of government services. It aims to reduce paper-based transactions, streamline procedures for business owners, and achieve effective electronic integration among government entities, ensuring faster processing and data accuracy.

Activating the electronic approvals exchange contributes to developing the regulatory framework, saving time and simplifying procedures for both business owners and relevant authorities.

The ministry confirmed that this initiative aligns with the state’s vision for modernizing government services and achieving comprehensive digital transformation.

US moves to yank highway funds

New York in crosshairs over commercial driver’s licenses

WASHINGTON, Dec 13, (AP): New York is the eighth state found to routinely issue commercial driver’s licenses to immigrants that are valid long after they are no longer legally authorized to be in the country, U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said Friday, and he threatened to withhold \$73 million in highway funds unless the system is fixed and any flawed licenses are revoked.

New York was the fourth state run by a Democratic governor called out publicly by Duffy in his effort to make sure truck and bus drivers are qualified to either haul passengers or 80,000 pounds of cargo down the highway. He previously questioned similar practices in California, Pennsylvania and Minnesota.

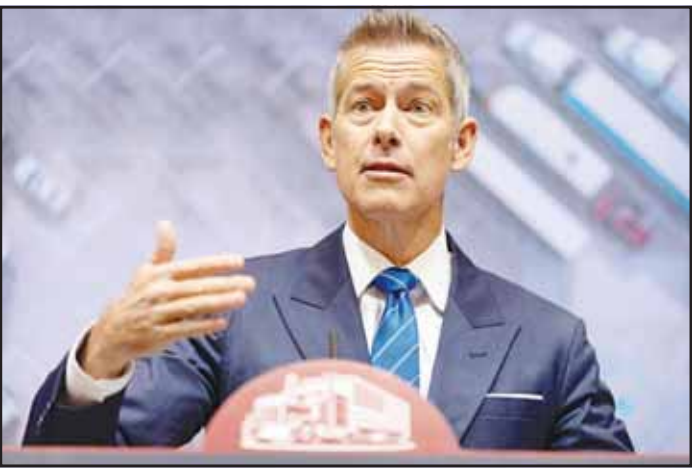
But letters have gone out to other states as well without fanfare, or comments from Duffy, including Republican-run Texas and South Dakota.

In addition to finding licenses that remained valid longer than they should have, these federal audits have also discovered instances where the states may not have even checked a driver’s immigration status before issuing a license. Investigators check a small sample of licenses in each state.

Duffy launched the review this summer, but it became more prominent after a truck driver who was not authorized to be in the U.S. made an illegal U-turn and caused a crash in Florida that killed three people in August. The rules on these licenses the Transportation Department is enforcing have been in place for years.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration sent letters to Texas, South Dakota, Colorado, and Washington during the government shutdown in October.

Most of the states that have been the focus of the investigation so far have defended their practices and said they were following



US Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy speaks during a news conference at the Department of Transportation in Washington, Friday, Dec. 12, 2025. (AP)

the federal rules. But Duffy has said the high percentage of problems in some states, combined with the defensive responses from officials, suggests a systematic problem, and he insisted Friday this effort is about safety - not politics. “When more than half of the licenses reviewed were issued illegally, it isn’t just a mistake - it is a dereliction of duty by state leadership,” Duffy said about New York on Friday.

Investigators also found that nearly half of the 123 licenses reviewed in Texas were flawed. Some of the other states involved small numbers, but most of the problems were similar. Since Duffy pressed the issue in California, the state has revoked some 21,000 commercial driver’s licenses that were issued improperly.

The Transportation Department has threatened to withhold federal highway funding from these states - including \$182 million in Texas and \$160 million in California - if they don’t reform their licensing programs and invalidate any flawed licenses.

So far, no state has lost money because they complied or because

they have more time to respond. But as part of a separate review, California lost \$40 million for failing to enforce English language requirements for truckers that the Trump administration began enforcing this summer.

New York State Department of Motor Vehicles spokesperson Walter McClure said the state is following all the federal rules.

“Secretary Duffy is lying about New York State once again in a desperate attempt to distract from the failing, chaotic administration he represents. Here is the truth: Commercial Drivers Licenses are regulated by the Federal Government, and New York State DMV has, and will continue to, comply with federal rules,” McClure said in a statement.

Duffy has previously threatened to pull federal funding from New York if the state did not abandon its plan to charge drivers a congestion pricing fee in New York City and if crime on the subway system was not addressed. The Transportation Department also put \$18 billion of funding on hold for two major infrastructure projects in New York, including a

new rail tunnel beneath the Hudson River between New York City and New Jersey, because of concerns about whether the spending was based on diversity, equity and inclusion principles.

A spokesperson for Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said in a statement that “public safety is the Governor’s top priority, and we must ensure that truckers can navigate Texas roadways safely and efficiently. To support this mission, Governor Abbott directed the Texas Department of Public Safety to strictly enforce English language proficiency requirements and to stop issuing intrastate commercial driver’s licenses to drivers who do not meet those standards.”

Most of the other states have said they are working to address the concerns the Transportation Department raised.

Immigrants account for about 20% of all truck drivers, but these non-domiciled licenses only represent about 5% of all commercial driver’s licenses or about 200,000 drivers. The Transportation Department also proposed new restrictions that would severely limit which noncitizens could get a license, but a court put the new rules on hold.

Trucking trade groups have praised the effort to get unqualified drivers and drivers who can’t speak English off the road along with the Transportation Department’s actions last week to go after questionable commercial driver’s license schools. But immigrant advocacy groups have raised concerns these actions have led to harassment of immigrant drivers and prompted some of them to abandon the profession.

“For too long, loopholes in this program have allowed unqualified drivers onto our highways, putting professional truckers and the motoring public at risk,” said Todd Spencer, who is president of the Owner Operator Independent Drivers Association.

20 states sue Trump’s fee hike of H-1B visas

LOS ANGELES, Dec 13, (Agencies): California and a coalition of 19 other states are suing the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump over its policy to hike fees on new H-1B visa petitions to 100,000 U.S. dollars, California Attorney General Rob Bonta said Friday.

The Trump administration announced in September to impose the fee for H-1B visas, claiming that the nonimmigrant visa program “has been deliberately exploited to replace, rather than supplement, American workers with lower-paid, lower-skilled labor.”

In the lawsuit, Bonta and the coalition of Democratic states allege that the policy, which has been implemented by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, is a clear violation of the law and would create a costly barrier for employers.

“As the world’s fourth-largest economy, California knows that when skilled talent from around the world joins our workforce, it drives our state forward,” Bonta said, calling the new fee an “unnecessary and illegal financial burdens” on public employers and other providers of vital services.

Bonta and Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell are leading the attorneys general of Minnesota, New York, Wisconsin, among other states, in filing the lawsuit, according to the news release.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a leading business group in the country, filed a legal challenge in October to block the Trump administration’s plan to charge the fee for H-1B visas.

Meanwhile, foreigners who are allowed to come to the United States without a visa could soon be required to submit information about their social media, email accounts and extensive family history to the Department of Homeland Security before being approved for travel.

The notice published Wednesday in the Federal Register said Customs and Border Protection is proposing collecting five years’ worth of social media information from travelers from select countries who do not have to get visas to come to the U.S. The Trump administration has been stepping up monitoring of international travelers

and immigrants.

The announcement refers to travelers from more than three dozen countries who take part in the Visa Waiver Program and submit their information to the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), which automatically screens them and then approves them for travel to the U.S. Unlike visa applicants, they generally do not have to go into an embassy or consulate for an interview.

DHS administers the program, which currently allows citizens of roughly 40 mostly European and Asian countries to travel to the U.S. for tourism or business for three months without visas.

The announcement also said that CBP would start requesting a list of other information, including telephone numbers the person has used over the past five years or email addresses used over the past decade. Also sought would be metadata from electronically submitted photos, as well as extensive information from the applicant’s family members, including their places of birth and their telephone numbers.

The application that people are now required to fill out to take part in ESTA asks for a more limited set of questions such as parents’ names and current email address.

Asked at a White House event whether he was concerned the measure might affect tourism to the U.S., President Donald Trump said no.

“We want safety, we want security, we want to make sure we’re not letting the wrong people come into our country,” Trump said.

The public has 60 days to comment on the proposed changes before they go into effect, the notice said.

CBP officials did not immediately respond to questions about the new rules.

The announcement did not say what the administration was looking for in the social media accounts or why it was asking for more information.

But the agency said it was complying with an executive order that Trump signed in January that called for more screening of people coming to the U.S. to prevent the entry of possible national security threats.

Former Iraqi president emerges as UNHCR pick

GENEVA, Dec 13, (AP): U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres has recommended former Iraqi president **Barham Salih** to become the next head of the U.N. refugee agency, the first nomination from the Middle East in half a century, according to a letter from the U.N. chief.

Salih, 65, is set to succeed longtime agency veteran Filippo Grandi as the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. Grandi took office on Jan. 1, 2016, and his second five-year term expires on Dec. 31. He succeeded Guterres in the post.

The expected succession comes at the end of a devastating year for many U.N. organizations like the Geneva-based refugee agency. It has cut thousands of jobs and spending in the wake of sharply reduced foreign aid contributions by the United States - traditionally its top donor - and other Western countries.

Salih, a native of Iraq’s Kurdistan region, served as Iraq’s president from 2018 to 2022. He would be the first non-Western head of the Geneva-based refugee agency since Prince Saddam bin Aga Khan of Iran from 1966 to 1977.

A signed letter from Guterres, dated Thursday, about the selection was addressed to Ambassador Atsuyuki Oike, Japan’s top diplomat in Geneva and chair of UNHCR’s executive committee. The letter was widely circulated on social media and a copy was provided to The Associated



Salih

Press on Friday.

Diplomatic officials in Geneva, speaking on condition of anonymity because the appointment had not been finalized, told the AP that the letter was authentic.

Alessandra Vellucci, chief spokesperson for the U.N. office in Geneva, said that the appointment must go through “a proper process” that includes consultations with the committee, and a final decision will be taken by the U.N. General Assembly in New York.

“The process is ongoing. And once it’s finished, there will be an official announcement made by the United Nations,” she told reporters at a regular U.N. briefing.

Salih’s presidential term came in the immediate aftermath of the Islamic State group’s rampage across Iraq and the battle to take back the territory seized by the extremist group, including the key northern city of Mosul.

At least 2.2 million Iraqis were displaced as they fled the IS offensive. Many, particularly members of the Yazidi minority from the northern Sinjar district, remain in displacement camps today.

U.S. President Donald Trump, during his first term, carried out an unannounced visit to Iraq when Salih was president.

Salih, who is from the city of Sulaimaniyah in northern Iraq’s semi-autonomous Kurdish region, joined the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party in 1976 and later worked in its foreign relations department in London. He lived abroad and studied at Cardiff University and the University of Liverpool during the rule of Iraq’s longtime autocratic leader, Saddam Hussein.

Torrential rains turn fields into lakes

Dramatic rescues as flooding ravages Washington state

BURLINGTON, Wash., Dec 13, (AP): When Eddie Wicks and his wife went to bed in their house next to the Snoqualmie River on a Washington state farm known for its sunflower mazes and Christmas trees, they weren’t too worried about the flooding heading their way.

After 30 years living in the city of Duvall northeast of Seattle, their family had plenty of experience with floods and always made it through largely unscathed. But as they moved their two donkeys to higher ground and their eight goats to their outdoor kitchen, the water began to rise much quicker than anything they’d experienced before.

“It was hours, not days,” he said. “In four hours it had to come up 4 feet.”

As the water engulfed their home Thursday afternoon, deputies from the King County Sheriff’s Office marine rescue dive unit were able to rescue them and their dog, taking them on a boat the half mile (800 meters) across their field, which had been transformed into a lake.

They were among the thousands forced to evacuate as an unusually strong atmospheric river dumped a foot (30 centimeters) or more of rain in parts of western and central Washington over several days this week and swelled rivers, inundating communities and prompting dramatic rescues from rooftops and vehicles.

The record floodwaters were expected to continue to slowly recede Saturday, but authorities warn that waters will remain high for days, and that there is still danger from potential levee failures or mudslides. There is also the threat of more rain forecast for Sunday.

Still, no deaths have been reported. Authorities have yet to estimate



Eric Gustin paddles to dry land after rescuing one of several chickens from a flooded coop, Friday, Dec. 12, 2025, in Burlington, Wash. (AP)

the costs, but photos and videos show widespread damage, with entire communities or neighborhoods flooded around western and central Washington. Officials have conducted dozens of water rescues, debris and mudslides have closed highways, and raging torrents have washed out roads and bridges.

President Donald Trump has signed the state’s request for an emergency declaration, Washington Gov. Bob Ferguson said.

Officials issued “go now” orders Wednesday to tens of thousands of residents in the Skagit River flood plain north of Seattle, including the farming city of Burlington, home to nearly 10,000 people. By Friday morning, muddy water overflowed a slough and rushed into homes, prompting more urgent warnings for Burlington.

The rain arriving Sunday will cause rivers to rise again, said Robert Ezelle, director of the Washington Military Department’s emergency management division.

National Guard members knocked on hundreds of doors in Burlington early Friday to tell residents about the evacuation notice and help transport them to a shelter. By late morning the evacuation order was lifted for part of the city and waters were slowly receding.

The Skagit River drains a wide swath of the rugged Cascade Range before winding west across broad, low-lying farmlands and tulip fields on its way to Puget Sound. Cities like Burlington sit on that delta, leaving them especially vulnerable to floods.

The river crested overnight Thursday into Friday at 37 feet (11.2 me-

ters) in the valley’s biggest city, Mount Vernon, surpassing the previous record by a few inches. A flood wall held fast and protected the downtown area.

About 1,000 Burlington residents had to evacuate in the middle of the night, Ferguson said. The water was reportedly 2 to 3 feet (60 to 90 centimeters) deep in certain areas as it flooded homes, police department spokesperson Michael Lumpkin said.

Mario Rincón had been staying at a hotel with his family, including a week-old infant. They returned to their Burlington property Friday but couldn’t get inside, as murky floodwaters reached part-way up the first floor.

“It’s going to be a few days before the water recedes,” he said.

Near the U.S.-Canada border, Sumas, Nooksack and Everson - which together have about 6,500 residents - were inundated. The border crossing at Sumas was closed.

In a social media message, Sumas Mayor Bruce Bosch acknowledged community members were anxious to return to their homes.

“Hang in there,” he wrote.

In King County, crews worked through the night to fill a sinkhole on a levee along the Green River in the Seattle suburb of Tukwila, County Executive Girmay Zahilay said Friday.

Authorities across the state in recent days have rescued people from cars and homes.

Helicopters rescued two families on Thursday from the roofs of homes in Sumas that had been flooded, according to Frank Cain Jr., battalion chief for Whatcom County Fire District 14.

Near Deming, two homes collapsed into the Nooksack River as erosion undercut them. No one was inside at the time.

Europe

Germany summons Russian envoy: Germany summoned Russia’s ambassador Friday following accusations of sabotage, cyberattacks and election interference, an official said.

The German government has also accused Moscow of perpetrating disinformation campaigns.

“The goal of these Russian cyber and disinformation attacks is clear: It is to divide society, stir up mistrust, provoke rejection, and weaken confidence in democratic institutions,” German foreign ministry spokesperson Martin Giese said.

“This targeted manipulation of information is one of a wide range of activities by Russia aimed at undermining confidence in democratic institutions and processes in Germany,” he said during a government news conference.

German officials have previously accused Russia of hybrid warfare attacks to destabilize Europe. Moscow didn’t immediately return a request for comment Friday.

Giese said that the shadowy Russian military intelligence agency known as GRU was behind a 2024 cyberattack against German air traffic control. The foreign ministry says GRU, which has been sanctioned in other countries, was responsible for the attack that was allegedly perpetrated by hacker collective APT28, also known as Fancy Bear.

APT28 and GRU have also been linked to global cyber intrusions, including in the 2016 U.S. election, where they were accused of aiding U.S. President Donald Trump by leaking Democratic Party emails.

Giese also said investigators believe GRU also attempted to destabilize and influence Germany’s last federal election, held in February, through a campaign called “Storm 1516.”

“Our services’ analysis shows that the campaign spreads artificially generated, pseudo-investigative research, deepfake image sequences, pseudo-journalistic websites, and fabricated witness statements on various platforms,” he said. Russia will face a series of countermeasures for its hybrid warfare, Giese said. (AP)

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Italy strike disrupts services: A national strike called on Friday by Italy’s largest trade union in protest against the government’s budget plans widely disrupted transportation, health and school services across the country.

The protest, which targets the 2026 budget bill proposed by the conservative government of Premier Giorgia Meloni, comes just two weeks after another general strike organized by smaller trade unions, with the same motivations.

The strike mainly hit railway transportation, with cancellations and delays registered for both long-distance and regional trains. Public schools across the country canceled classes, forcing students to stay home because of a lack of local public transportation in many cities.

The CGIL union listed the reasons for the strike in a statement, including demands for greater investments in healthcare, education and housing rights, along with measures to tackle workplace safety.

CGIL secretary-general Maurizio Landini, who led a rally in Florence on Fri-



Pope Leo XIV, right, salutes faithful at the end of an audience with participants in the Jubilee of Italian Diplomacy in the Paul VI Hall, at the Vatican, Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025. (AP)

day morning, criticized the budget as “unfair, wrong and dangerous.” He said that the main social emergency is now represented by low wages, and that government measures don’t address that.

Tens of thousands of workers took to the streets on Friday as demonstrations and rallies supporting the strike took place from north to south.

When the protest was announced last month, Meloni and Transport Minister Matteo Salvini mocked the union for organizing the strike as usual on a Friday, suggesting that it was an excuse for a long weekend. (AP)

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Drone attack kills 2 in Russia: At least two people were killed in a drone attack in Russia’s southwestern Saratov region and parts of Ukraine went without power following targeted assaults on energy infrastructure, local authorities said Saturday, as U.S.-led peace talks on ending the war press on.

The drone attack damaged a residential building and several windows were also blown out at a kindergarten and clinic, said Saratov regional Gov. Roman Busargin.

Russia’s defense ministry said it had shot down 41 Ukrainian drones over Russian territory overnight. In Ukraine, Russia launched overnight drone and missile strikes on five Ukrainian regions, targeting energy and port infrastructure.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia had sent over 450 drones and 30 missiles into Ukraine overnight.

“Thousands of families are now left without electricity after strikes last night in Kirovohrad, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Sumy, Kharkiv, Kherson and Chernihiv regions,” he wrote on Telegram.

An attack on the Black Sea city of Odesa caused grain silos to catch fire at the port, Ukrainian deputy prime minister and reconstruction minister Oleksiy Kuleba said. Two people were wounded in attacks on the wider Odesa region, according to regional head Oleh Kiper.

Kyiv and its Western allies say Russia is trying to cripple the Ukrainian power grid and deny civilians access to heat, light and running water for a fourth consecutive winter, in what Ukrainian officials call “weaponizing” the cold.

The latest round of attacks came after Kremlin adviser Yuri Ushakov said Friday that Russian police and National Guard will stay on in eastern Ukraine’s Donbas and oversee the industry-rich region, even if a peace settlement ends Russia’s nearly four-year war in Ukraine. This underscores Moscow’s ambition to maintain its presence in Donbas post-war. Ukraine is likely to reject such a stance as U.S.-led negotiations drag on. (AP)

Thai villagers stay behind to guard empty homes as border clashes force mass evacuations

Fighting rages on Thai-Cambodian border despite Trump ceasefire claim

SURIN, Thailand, Dec 13, (AP): Fighting continued to rage Saturday morning along the border of Thailand and Cambodia, even after U.S. President Donald Trump, acting as a mediator, declared that he had won agreement from both countries for a ceasefire.

Thai officials have said they did not agree to a ceasefire, and Cambodia has not commented on Trump's claim. Its defense ministry instead said Thai jets carried out airstrikes Saturday morning. Cambodian media reported Trump's claim without elaborating.

The latest large-scale fighting was set off by a skirmish on Dec. 7 that wounded two Thai soldiers and derailed a ceasefire promoted by Trump that ended five days of earlier combat in July over longstanding territorial disputes. The July ceasefire was brokered by Malaysia and pushed through by pressure from Trump, who threatened to withhold trade privileges unless Thailand and Cambodia agreed. It was formalized in more detail in October at a regional meeting in Malaysia that Trump attended.

About two dozen people have officially been reported killed in this past week's fighting, while hundreds of thousands have been displaced on both sides of the border.

The Thai military acknowledges 11 of its troops have been killed, while estimating there have been 165 fatalities among Cambodian soldiers. Cambodia has not announced military casualties, but has said at least 11 civilians have been killed and 76 wounded.

Trump on Friday, after speaking to Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, had announced an agreement to restart the ceasefire.

"They have agreed to CEASE all shooting effective this evening, and go back to the original Peace Accord made with me, and them, with the help of the Great Prime Minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim," Trump said in his Truth Social post.



Children raise their hands while receiving donation from charity as they take refuge in Banteay Menchey provincial town, Cambodia, Saturday, Dec. 13, 2025, after fleeing homes following fighting between Thailand and Cambodia. (AP)

Trump's claim came after midnight in Bangkok. Thai Prime Minister Anutin had after his call with Trump said he had explained Thailand's reasons for fighting and said peace would depend on Cambodia ceasing its attacks first. The Thai foreign ministry later explicitly disputed Trump's claim that a ceasefire had been reached. Anutin's

Minister Anwar Ibrahim, and thanked both "for their continuous efforts to achieve a long-lasting peace between Cambodia and Thailand." "Cambodia is ready to cooperate in any way that is needed," Hun Manet wrote.

Thailand has been carrying out airstrikes on what it says are strictly military targets, while Cambodia has been

evacuated.

However, the Thai army announced Saturday that BM-21 rockets had hit a civilian area in Sisaket province, seriously injuring two civilians who had heard warning sirens and had been running toward a bunker for safety.

Meanwhile, fighting that has flared along the Thai-Cambodian border has sent hundreds of thousands of Thai villagers fleeing from their homes close to the frontier since Monday. Their once-bustling communities have fallen largely silent except for the distant rumble of firing across the fields.

Yet in several of these villages, where normally a few hundred people live, a few dozen residents have chosen to stay behind despite the constant sounds of danger.

In a village in Buriram province, about 6 miles (10 kilometers) from the border, Somjai Kraiprakon and roughly 20 of her neighbors gathered around a roadside house, keeping watch over nearby homes. Appointed by the local administration as Village Security Volunteers, they guarded the empty homes after many residents were forced to flee and with fewer security officials stationed nearby than usual.

The latest large-scale fighting derailed a ceasefire pushed by U.S. President Donald Trump, which halted five days of clashes in July triggered by longstanding territorial disputes. As of Saturday, around two dozen people had been reported killed in the renewed violence.

At a house on the village's main intersection, now a meeting point, kitchen and sleeping area, explosions were a regular backdrop, with the constant risk of stray ammunition landing nearby. Somjai rarely flinched, but when the blasts came too close, she would sprint to a makeshift bunker beside the house, built on an empty plot from large precast concrete drainage pipes reinforced with dirt, sandbags and car tires.

China holds memorial for Nanjing Massacre victims, calling for remembrance of history

NANJING, Dec 13, (Xinhua): Xia Shuqin, 96, sat eagerly in front of the television early Saturday morning, eyes fixed on the live broadcast of the 12th national memorial day ceremony in her hometown Nanjing, capital of east China's Jiangsu Province.

Eighty-eight years ago, in that brutal, freezing winter, seven members of Xia's family -- her parents, grandparents and sisters -- were among the 300,000 lives lost in the Nanjing Massacre.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression.

At the square of the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders, thousands dressed in dark attire gathered with white flowers pinned to their chests. China's national flag was flown at half-mast in front of the crowd that included survivors of the massacre, local students and international friends.

"Eighty-eight years have passed and the Japanese government still has not officially acknowledged the Nanjing Massacre," said Xia. "If they refuse to face the crimes they committed, how can we guarantee such atrocities won't happen again?"

The Nanjing Massacre took place when Japanese troops captured the then-Chinese capital on Dec. 13, 1937. Over the course of six weeks, they proceeded to kill approximately 300,000 Chinese civilians and unarmed soldiers in one of the most barbaric episodes of World War II (WWII). One person was killed every 12 seconds.

To forget akin to killing second time

Xia Shuqin still treasures a faded group photo taken 80 years ago to celebrate the victory, a photograph capturing only a part of her family. At the age of eight, she witnessed seven members of her nine-person household tortured and killed by invading Japanese soldiers who broke into her home. She herself was stabbed three times and lost consciousness, only to awaken to the sound of her four-year-old sister crying among the bodies.

"As long as I live, I will seek justice for the 300,000 compatriots who were slaughtered," said Xia, who became the first Nanjing Massacre survivor to travel to Japan after the war to testify to the crimes by Japanese troops. She was smeared as a false witness by Japanese right-wing groups and won a lawsuit against them in 2009.

Over the years, Xia has recounted her heart-wrenching story countless times, each retelling reopening old wounds.

In 2025 alone, eight Nanjing Massacre survivors passed away, leaving only 24 registered survivors still living, according to the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders.

In San Jose, California, a public memorial will be held in a park named after Iris Shun-Ru Chang, the author of The Rape of Nanking, a bestselling non-fiction book detailing the massacre and atrocities committed by invading Japanese forces.

"In 1997, she awakened the world with her pen of sorrow and indignation. Today, facing the clamor of the right wing, we must solidify memory with memorials, because forgetting means a second massacre," said Iris's mom, Ying-Ying Chang.

She was quoting Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel, who wrote in his memoir Night: "To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be



Top: A national memorial ceremony for the Nanjing Massacre victims is held at the Memorial Hall of the Victims in Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders in Nanjing, capital of east China's Jiangsu Province, Dec. 13, 2025. Above: People pay tributes to martyrs at a monument of a memorial hall for the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression in western Yunnan, in Tengchong, southwest China's Yunnan Province, Dec. 13, 2025. (Xinhua)

akin to killing them a second time."

British poet W. H. Auden, who was in China during WWII, drew a parallel between what was happening in Europe and China in a poem. "And maps can really point to places, where life is evil now: Nanking; Dachau." Dachau was the location of the first Nazi concentration camp in Germany.

Thomas Rabe is the grandson of German businessman John Rabe, who joined other foreigners to establish an international safe zone during the massacre, saving over 250,000 Chinese lives. "Nazi Germany committed the holocaust, a crime against humanity that must never be repeated. After WWII, Germany made peace with its former victims and took responsibility, with Israel, France, Poland, and others. Unfortunately, not all countries have learned from the past," he said.

Chang said her late daughter aimed to advocate peace and urge Japan to confront its wartime history. "Apparently, certain Japanese politicians haven't reflected at all," she told Xinhua.

This year's memorial day came when China-Japan relations face renewed tensions following recent provocative actions by some Japanese politicians.

Chang saw Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's remarks as "much more outrageous than when Iris wrote the book." Takaichi has hinted that the country could intervene militarily in the Taiwan question.

It's clear that the Japanese right-wing figures want to resurrect milita-

rism, probably wage another war on China, and that leaves China no choice but to be more vigilant, Chang said.

Zhang Sheng, head of the Research Society of the History of Nanjing Massacre by Japanese Invaders, said that Japan has revised its textbooks and systematically distorted narratives of WWII history since the 1990s to downplay or even whitewash the country's war crimes.

"Such historical distortion has led to a notable decline in the number of Japanese people with an accurate understanding of the massacre," he warned.

Passing on memory to later generations

The truth of the massacre was not only witnessed by survivors and rescuers, but also captured and documented by international individuals residing in Nanjing at the time. During the Tokyo trial, a large amount of evidence of the Nanjing Massacre was confirmed, and the culprit, general Iwane Matsui, was sentenced to death.

Evidences show that the Japanese army used brutal methods such as mass shootings, live burials, knife strikes, and arson to kill Chinese unarmed soldiers and civilians. They carried out massive rape, looting, burning and destruction simultaneously.

According to records, eight charitable organizations participated in the recovery and burial of bodies after the massacre. The Nanjing branch of the World Red Cross alone collected and buried 43,123 bodies, while the charity organization Chongshan Hall in Nanjing collected and buried a total of 112,266 bodies.

LA PAZ, Bolivia, Dec 13, (AP): A Bolivian court has ordered the country's former President Luis Arce to remain detained for five months while he awaits trial on corruption charges, the latest development in a case that threatens to exacerbate Bolivia's political tensions.

Arce, 62, a leader from Bolivia's Movement Toward Socialism party, was elected in 2020 and left office a month ago following the election of Bolivia's first right-wing leader in nearly two decades. He strongly denies the charges of breach of duty and financial misconduct. He faces up to six years in prison if convicted.

Two days after Arce's sudden arrest on the streets of Bolivia's capital of La Paz, a judge ordered his detention in a virtual hearing Friday.

Arce was transferred to one of Bolivia's largest prisons in La Paz at night. No trial date was announced.

The accusations concern the alleged diversion of millions of dollars from a state fund into private accounts and date back to when Arce served as economy minister under former President Evo Morales from 2006 until 2017.

Although the scandal first broke in 2017, investigations into the alleged graft stalled during Morales' presidency as Bolivia's courts proved submissive to the political power of the day. The case was reopened when conservative President Rodrigo Paz took office last month, ending almost two decades



Bolivia's former president Luis Arce comments to the press as he is escorted to San Pedro Prison after his arrest as part of a corruption investigation in La Paz, Bolivia, Friday, Dec. 12, 2025. (AP)

of dominance by the Movement Toward Socialism, or MAS, party.

Paz campaigned on a promise to clean up the government and seek justice for corruption as he rode to power on a wave of outrage over Bolivia's worst economic crisis in four decades.

Arce criticized the charges as political persecution.

Also:

WASHINGTON: The U.S. removed Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes from its sanctions list on Friday after initially adding him over his role in leading the trial against

former Brazilian President **Jair Bolsonaro**.

De Moraes' wife and the Lex Institute, which she leads, were also taken off the list, according to documents from the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control. Brazil's government celebrated the move, which came after a weekend phone conversation between President **Donald Trump** and President **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva**.

The Trump administration had sanctioned the judge in July, accusing him of using his position to authorize arbitrary pretrial detentions and suppress freedom of expression in **Brazil**.

India, Austria discuss regional, global issues

NEW DELHI, Dec 13, (Agencies): India and Austria on Friday held talks on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest.

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs said that as part of the 8th India-Austria Foreign Office Consultations held in Vienna, the two sides undertook a comprehensive review of the entire gamut of bilateral relations.

"Views were exchanged on India-EU relations as well as key regional and global developments of mutual interest. The discussions covered a wide range of areas, including political engagement, trade and economic cooperation, science and technology, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people ties," the statement said.

Cooperation between the two sides in international and multilateral fora was also discussed.

Secretary at the Ministry of External Affairs **Sibi George** led the Indian delegation while the Austrian side was led by Secretary General for Foreign Affairs, Federal Minister for European and International Affairs **Nikolaus Marschik**.

In other news, India's federal government said Thursday that 1,951 incidents of Global Positioning System (GPS) spoofing and interference with aircraft have been reported across various airports in the country during the past two years.

According to Minister of State for Civil Aviation **Murlidhar Mohol**, GPS interference reporting started after the publication of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation advisory circular on Nov. 24, 2023 regarding Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) interference in airspace.

GPSGNSS spoofing and jamming refer to attempts to manipulate a user's navigation system by giving false signals.

Mohol said the International Civil Aviation Organization identifies GNSS spoofing as a form of International Radio Frequency Interference, and India's Wireless Monitoring Organization is investigating the matter.

Earlier this month, Minister of Civil Aviation **Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu** confirmed that incidents of GPS spoofing and interference with flights have been reported at major airports in the country, including Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Amritsar, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Chennai.



George

Africa

Eritrea quits bloc: Eritrea on Friday withdrew from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, accusing the East African regional bloc of nations of acting against the country's interests.

At the same time, the United Nations expressed concern over renewed tensions between Eritrea and neighboring Ethiopia, which signed a peace agreement 25 years ago.

Eritrea's foreign ministry said in a statement Friday it was withdrawing "from an organization that has forfeited its legal mandate and authority; offering no discernible strategic benefit to all its constituencies and failing to contribute substantively to the stability of the region."

Eritrea quit IGAD in 2003 and rejoined two years ago, but said Friday that the bloc had failed to contribute to regional stability. IGAD responded by saying Eritrea had not participated in regional activities since it rejoined.

Eritrea and Ethiopia have in recent months accused each other of interference, sparking concerns over the possibility of a return to hostilities. (AP)

☐ ☐ ☐

UK sanctions RSF chiefs: The United Kingdom sanctioned senior commanders of Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces on Friday, over what it said were their links to mass killings, systematic sexual violence and deliberate attacks on civilians in the African country.

Abdul Rahim Hamdan Dagalo, the RSF Deputy Leader and brother of RSF commander Mohamad Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, as well as three other commanders that are suspected of involvement in these crimes, now face asset freezes and travel bans, the British government said.

"The atrocities taking place in Sudan are so horrific they scar the conscience of the world," foreign minister Yvette Cooper said in the statement. "Today's sanctions against RSF commanders strike directly at those with blood on their hands." (KUNA)

☐ ☐ ☐

'Cease DRC hostilities': A Chinese envoy on Friday called on the March 23 Movement (M23) to immediately cease hostilities in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The current situation in eastern DRC remains tense as escalating conflict and violence have led to a grave humanitarian crisis, said Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the United Nations.

It is imperative to end hostilities immediately, he told the Security Council.

M23 has launched a wave of offensives in recent days and captured key cities such as Uvira, leading to a sudden escalation of tensions on the ground. China is deeply concerned over those developments and strongly condemns the violence committed by M23, he said. (Xinhua)

Investor demand surges as ABK Tier 2 bonds oversubscribed fivefold

ABK announces successful completion of its KD 30 million Tier 2 bond issuance

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has announced the successful completion of its KD 30 million Tier 2 bond issuance, which was jointly managed by Ahli Capital Investment Company (ABK Capital) and Kamco Invest as Joint Lead Managers.

The issuance witnessed exceptionally strong investor demand, with subscriptions exceeding the offered amount by more than five times, underscoring the high level of confidence in ABK’s credit standing and the broader stability of the Kuwaiti financial sector.

The robust subscription levels were driven by participation from a diverse base of institutional investors, asset managers, and financial institutions, and private banking clients reflecting sustained appetite for high-quality fixed-income instruments in Kuwait.

The successful Tier 2 issuance will further reinforce ABK’s capital adequacy ratios, supporting the bank’s long-term balance sheet resilience. By enhancing its Tier 2 capital base, ABK is better positioned to pursue strategic growth initiatives, expand its lending capacity, and maintain a strong buffer to support sustainable expansion and risk management across its operations.

Commenting on the occasion, Giel-Jan M. Van Der Tol, Group



Giel-Jan M. Van Der Tol, Group CEO of ABK

CEO of ABK, said, “This Tier 2 issuance represents a significant milestone within the Bank’s ongoing growth strategy. The strong response not only highlights investor confidence in our long-term direction but also reinforces the Bank’s capital position. By strengthening our Tier 2 capital base, we are further enhancing ABK’s ability to support our customers, communities, and future growth.”

Furthermore, Sherif ElRafie, CEO of ABK Capital said, “The overwhelming investor response to this issuance demonstrates the strong confidence placed in ABK’s vision and solid financial fundamentals. We are proud to have played a leading role in managing this transaction and delivering such exceptional results, reaffirming our continued commitment to delivering value to both our clients and investors.”



Sherif ElRafie, CEO of ABK Capital

On his part, Faisal M. Sarkhou, CEO of Kamco Invest, said, “We are proud to have participated in this issuance, which reflects the strength of ABK and reaffirms the solid confidence in Kuwait’s economy and its banking sector.

This year witnessed strong interest from debt issuers across the region as well as from investors, and we were privileged to have played a prominent role in many of these issuances in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar.

We would like to express our appreciation for the tremendous efforts made by the Debt Capital Markets team at Kamco Invest in executing this transaction, as well as for the constructive and professional collaboration demonstrated by the joint lead manager.”



Faisal M. Sarkhou, CEO of Kamco Invest

Growing Market Activity

This issuance comes amid increasing activity across Kuwait’s and the region’s capital markets, with financial institutions actively seeking to diversify funding sources and strengthen their capital positions through bond and sukuk issuances.

The success of this transaction further enhances ABK’s standing as a leading contributor to the development of Kuwait’s debt capital market, in line with the Bank’s future plans to grow its balance sheet and improve capital efficiency.

The strong investor response also reflects growing confidence among local investors in ABK’s credit quality, paving the way for additional advanced financing transactions that meet the evolving needs of banks and major corporates in the market.

Active Role

This achievement represents a continuation of ABK Capital’s expanding role as a key arranger and financial adviser, as the company continues to build its execution track record through the delivery of integrated financing solutions.

ABK Capital is further broadening its advisory services to help stimulate the local bond market and support institutions in developing more resilient and sustainable capital structures.

The success of this issuance marks another step forward in ABK Capital’s strategic objective to build long-term partnerships with local institutions, contributing to Kuwait’s economic growth and expanding the range of funding instruments available to investors.

In conclusion, Van Der Tol said, “On behalf of ABK Group, I would like to thank our Joint Lead Managers, ABK Capital and Kamco Invest, and our legal advisors ASAR – Al Ruwayeh & Partners for their professionalism and steadfast support throughout the process.

We are also grateful to the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Capital Markets Authority for their guidance and continued trust. Their collaboration was instrumental in achieving this important milestone for the Bank.”

Other Voices

Oil downturn amid ample availability

By Kamel Al-Harami
Independent Oil Analyst

Yes, oil prices are not expected to recover soon. U.S. crude is at \$57, while Brent crude is trading at \$61 a barrel, causing huge strain on producers and exporters. Low prices and reduced income are creating shortages in their year-end budgets.

Independent oil operators are also facing financial losses, while oil-producing countries are under pressure and turning to global banks for further aid, seeking more borrowings and extended payment terms. Many are still hoping for a recovery by the end of next year or within the next 12 months.

Oil has dropped surprisingly to the low \$50s, a level not seen for a long time, last occurring in late 2020. OPEC+ is not willing to cut volume for the benefit of other producers or allow them to benefit from OPEC+ sacrifices. The concerning part is that oil prices may remain weak beyond 2026. OPEC+ will need to act and manage the situation effectively or consider enlarging its group, as current measures of reducing production and quota adjustments are no longer effective.

The ample availability of crude oil globally is pushing prices down, with OPEC+ neither willing nor in a position to act alone.

It is time to consider a new strategy with closer engagement with consumers. However, with excess crude available, all producers are focused on marketing and selling their production at any price that secures both short- and long-term contracts, or to lock in customers and ensure a stable market.

The forecast for oil prices over the next two years is expected to remain within the range of \$55 to \$58 per barrel. This estimate is based on marketing sources projecting a surplus of more than two million barrels per day next year, with similar levels expected in 2027. The increase is driven by rising U.S. crude production and Brazil’s push for higher output, bringing regional oil availability to around 106 million barrels per day, representing an annual growth of more than 1.7 million barrels per day.

The new oil growth in Brazil and Guyana in Latin America, expected in 2025-2026, is projected to exceed one million barrels per day, bringing Brazil’s production close to six million barrels per day. This will add more crude oil to the global market, pushing prices down to the \$55-\$58 range and potentially causing further decline in crude oil prices.

The influx of additional barrels, combined with a possible ceasefire and settlement in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, could further weaken oil prices. OPEC+ may have limited ability to intervene, and if this additional volume hits the market, it could trigger panic selling and push prices closer to the \$50 level.

There is certainly no positive news.

Meanwhile, OPEC+ has no plans to correct or stabilize oil prices, and quota reductions and production cuts are no longer effective. New mechanisms must be found to restore oil prices to an acceptable level, well above the low \$50s. OPEC must act, and act quickly.

As has been suggested for some time, OPEC+ may need to turn to international banks for long-term borrowing, as weaker oil prices are expected to persist unless decisive action is taken by OPEC.

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Al-Harami

CMA and Boursa Kuwait open flexible listing platform for growing firms

After successful technical tests, Emerging Companies Market set to launch and accept listing applications

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Following the successful completion of all technical and operational requirements in coordination with capital market stakeholders and participants, the Emerging Companies Market will officially launch and begin accepting listing applications starting Sunday, December 14, 2025.

The Emerging Companies Market was established as a result of a joint effort led by the Capital Markets Authority, which approved the regulatory framework for the market and updated the listing rules to reinforce corporate commitment to disclosure and governance requirements. These measures aim to enhance transparency and liquidity, while enabling small and medium-sized enterprises to access more flexible funding channels and fostering investor confidence through a balanced regulatory environment aligned with international best practices.

In addition, Boursa Kuwait completed a series of technical upgrades and operational tests, covering automated systems and trading platforms, in collaboration with market participants including brokerage firms and service providers, an integrated approach that ensures the market’s readiness from launch and lays the foundation for a fair and transparent trading environment tailored to small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The ECM is the fruit of institutional coordination between the Capital Markets Authority and Boursa Kuwait and demonstrates the collective commitment of the capital market ecosystem to creating a secure and efficient listing environment.

Supporting the growth of national companies and offers investors new opportunities within a modern regulatory and operational framework, the ECM enhances the competitiveness of Kuwait’s capital market and contributes to the country’s economic development goals.

“The operational readiness of the Emerging Companies Market marks a pivotal milestone in Boursa Kuwait’s strategy to broaden its base of issuers and investors, while advancing market infrastructure in alignment with international standards, said Boursa Kuwait’s Head of Markets Noura AlAbdulkareem.

“This achievement reflects effective institutional collaboration, with the Capital Markets Authority providing regulatory leadership and the legislative framework, and Boursa Kuwait ensuring full technical and operational preparedness. Together, these efforts aim to empower national companies to grow and contribute to a robust and sustainable private sector that supports the national economy,” she added.

“We deeply value the continuous support of the Capital Markets Authority and the efforts of our partners across the capital market apparatus, whose contributions to the extensive technical testing were vital in ensuring a transparent, efficient and fully prepared market that serves all participants effectively.”

Listing on the Emerging Companies Market represents a strategic opportunity for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), providing access to diverse sources of funding at a lower cost compared to traditional financing, which is made possible through improved transparency, enhanced governance practices and reduced risk.

Listing also enables companies to attain higher valuations due to greater business clarity, stronger corporate governance and improved share tradability within



Noura AlAbdulkareem

a regulated market that reflects their true value through fair pricing mechanisms. It also enhances a company’s credibility and strengthens investor and financial institution confidence, opening the door to new local and international partnerships and investments, while supporting sustainable growth and expansion.

The Emerging Companies Market features flexible listing requirements tailored to the nature of SMEs, including:

- A minimum fair value of capital of KD 750,000, determined by a CMA-licensed asset valuer or investment advisor.
- A minimum free float of 20% of the company’s capital.
- A minimum of 20 shareholders, each holding shares worth no less than KD 5,000.
- The company must continue conducting its core business activities as defined in its Articles of Association, with most of its revenue generated from those activities.
- Submission of audited financial statements for the two full fiscal years preceding the listing application date.

Companies may list either capital increase shares or shares held by existing shareholders, subject to the approved listing requirements.

Companies interested in listing on the Emerging Companies Market can visit Boursa Kuwait’s official website to complete the “Listing Readiness Assessment” form. For additional support throughout the listing journey, including guidance at each stage and access to a network of approved advisors with legal and regulatory expertise, they may contact the Institutional Investor Affairs team within the Markets Sector of Boursa Kuwait.

As part of its market development plans, Boursa Kuwait continues to advance initiatives that serve the interests of investors, issuers, and all market participants, in collaboration with its partners in the capital market apparatus.

The company prepared the technical infrastructure to ensure market readiness for the listing and trading of Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs) and fixed-income instruments such as sukuk and bonds, as part of the second phase of Stage Three of the Market Development Program (MD 3.2), launched in July.

The capital market apparatus continues technical testing of clearing and settlement systems to enable the trading of Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs), bonds and sukuk in US dollars. Relevant stakeholders are working together to integrate all supporting systems for trading, settlement and currency conversion.

Since succeeding the Kuwait Stock Exchange and assuming responsibility for managing and operating the stock market in 2016, Boursa Kuwait has worked to build an advanced trading ecosystem defined by reliability and flexibility. This development has been supported by modern infrastructure and regulatory procedures aligned with global best practices, which strengthened the market’s ability to attract liquidity and enhanced its competitiveness regionally and internationally.

The privatization of the exchange in 2019 marked a major turning point, as Boursa Kuwait became the first government entity in the country to be fully privatized successfully. This shift directly improved levels of efficiency and corporate governance and was followed by the company’s self-listing in 2020, reaffirming its commitment to transparency and strengthening investor confidence in the market.

As part of its development strategy, the exchange continued to implement initiatives to comprehensively upgrade infrastructure and diversify investment instruments. These efforts, carried out in cooperation with the broader capital market apparatus, culminated in the reclassification of the Kuwaiti market to Emerging Market status by the world’s leading index providers.

These achievements affirm Boursa Kuwait’s position as an attractive investment platform capable of supporting sustainable growth and reflect its commitment to enhancing the competitiveness of the national economy and advancing the objectives of the “New Kuwait” Vision and the country’s broader development plan.

MoF, FMA discuss financial reforms & sustainable economic planning

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance, Aseel Sulaiman Al-Saad Al-Munaifi, received FMA Co-Chairman Francis Maude Lord Horsham on Thursday during his visit to Kuwait.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Finance, the meeting, which was attended by several Ministry of Finance officials, focused on exchanging views on financial and structural reforms and their impact on the national economy. Discussions also covered strategies for efficient government spending to optimize resource use and strengthen financial planning.

The meeting reflects the Ministry of Finance’s commitment to intensifying efforts to implement financial reform plans, reducing waste, and boosting non-oil revenues to ensure the country’s long-term financial sustainability.



Ministry of Finance photo

Undersecretary Al-Munaifi meets FMA co-chair to review financial reforms.

At the annual Telecom Review Excellence Awards in Dubai

Zain Kuwait clinches three prestigious awards for its leadership in 5G-Advanced, network experience, and digital transformation



Nawaf Al-Gharabally receives the Best 5G Advanced Leading Network in Kuwait award.



Al-Gharabally receives the Best BSS/OSS Solutions in the Middle East award.



Waleed Al-Khashti receives the Best Network Experience and Service in the Middle East award.

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Zain Kuwait has been awarded with three prestigious regional accolades at the Telecom Review Excellence Awards, held alongside the Telecom Review Leaders’ Summit in Dubai. The awards recognized the company’s leadership in launching 5G-Advanced (5G-A) technology, delivering superior network and service experience, and accelerating the digital transformation journey through advanced business support system (BSS) solutions.

At the ceremony, Zain Kuwait CEO Nawaf Al-Gharabally received the awards for Best 5G Advanced Leading Network in Kuwait, Best Network Experience and Service in the Middle East, and Best BSS/OSS Solutions in the Middle East. This new milestone further underscores the company’s position as the country’s leading digital innovator.

Commenting on the achievement, Nawaf Al-Gharabally said: “This reflects the international telecom community’s recognition of the transformation journey Zain is leading in Kuwait and across the region. It is a distinguished testimony that our continuous investment in the network and digital systems is being translated into a tangible experience that our customers feel every day, whether in terms of connection speed and service quality or the simplicity and ease of the entire digital experience.”

He added: “What makes these accolades particularly special is that they are all linked to the core pillars of our 4WARD ‘Progress with Purpose’ strategy, from leading 5G-Advanced networks, to shifting toward digital operating models, through to building future-ready infrastructure that supports economic growth and digital innovation in Kuwait.”

Al-Gharabally continued: “The true value of technology lies in serving people and elevating their lives. While our network and digital innovations are the foundation of our business, our real strength is the people on both sides of the network, from the teams who build and operate these platforms to the customers whose needs we place at the heart of every decision we make.”

He concluded: “Our recent successes in areas such as enabling robotic telesurgery, which set a Guinness World Record for the longest-distance remote surgery between Kuwait and Brazil, prove that intelligent networks can truly change people’s lives. At the same time, our energy efficiency initiatives reflect a genuine commitment to reducing carbon emissions and energy consumption across our network infrastructure.”

■ **Nawaf Al-Gharabally:** This achievement reflects the international telecom community’s recognition of the transformation journey Zain is leading in Kuwait and across the region

Al-Gharabally also took part in the Telecom Review Leaders’ Summit in a dedicated fireside chat, during which he outlined Zain’s vision for the future. He explained that the role of telecom operators goes beyond providing connectivity to enabling digital innovation, building platforms and services with a clear human purpose, and connecting people to better opportunities in their lives and businesses.

He highlighted Zain Kuwait’s network achievements, including global benchmarks that recognize its excellence in network performance and 5G experience, as well as its role in enabling critical applications in healthcare, education, and business. He stressed the importance of combining network efficiency with environmental sustainability and lower emissions.

Zain Kuwait received the Best 5G Advanced Leading Network in Kuwait award in recognition of its efforts to position the Kuwaiti market among the first in the world to launch commercial 5G-Advanced in June of this year. The service features wide coverage and infrastructure designed in line with the highest international standards to support smart cities, Internet of Things applications, and more.

The launch was accompanied by a 30-day free trial that allowed customers to experience a new world of speed and reliability in connectivity, in addition to a human-centered marketing campaign that focused on how technology can make everyday life more meaningful and impactful.

The company also earned the Best Network Experience and Service in the Middle East award for delivering a fully integrated network experience on a regional level. This is anchored in its 5G-Advanced deployment with extensive coverage, low latency, and intelligent capacity management using carrier aggregation (CCA).

This recognition is further supported by the company’s leading results in in-

As part of its ongoing commitment

Warba Bank partakes in the Subhan Arabian Horse Show

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: As part of its commitment to supporting initiatives that celebrate Kuwait’s cultural heritage and empower young talents, Warba Bank announced its participation in the Subhan Arabian Horse Show, organized by the Kuwait Equestrian Center. The participation reinforces the Bank’s dedication to being present at events that highlight the value of traditional equestrian sports and encourage young Kuwaitis to engage with this noble heritage that reflects authenticity, grace and strength of character.

This initiative comes as an extension of Warba Bank’s strategic approach to supporting Kuwaiti youth, not only academically and professionally, but also through sports and cultural activities that help build strong personalities and refine essential life skills. By supporting equestrian sports, the Bank contributes to preserving an important element of national identity, promoting healthy and active lifestyles, and instilling values of discipline and perseverance among younger generations.

Dr. Mohammad Barakat, Chief Marketing and Corporate Communications at Warba Bank, stated: “Our participation in the Subhan Arabian Horse Show is an integral part of our youth empowerment strategy, which views young talent as an important ecosystem. Just as we support innovators and entrepreneurs through our Rowad program, and open new horizons for youth in scientific, educational, athletic and cultural fields, we also believe in strengthening their connection to their heritage through equestrian sports. This integrated approach is the true embodiment of our vision, ‘Let’s Own Tomorrow’. We are not investing in just one sector; we are investing in building a new generation of Kuwaitis equipped with modern skills, proud of their cultural identity and driven by the values symbolized by the Arabian horse. Our support today is an in-



Dr. Mohammad Barakat

vestment in the leaders, innovators and ambassadors of Kuwait’s future.”

The show runs until 14 December 2025 at the Kuwait Equestrian Center track in Subhan. This year’s edition features an extensive lineup of more than 300 horses representing Kuwait’s leading studs and training centers, with the participation of international judges to ensure the highest standards of fairness and professionalism. The competition is divided into two main categories: Arabian horses of mixed bloodlines and Egyptian-bred Arabian horses.

Through such initiatives, Warba Bank reaffirms its role as an active community partner, committed to supporting all efforts that contribute to youth development and strengthen Kuwait’s cultural and national identity.

Warba Bank has achieved remarkable success in a short period, securing a leading position in Islamic digital banking services. It is also among the local banks with the largest number of shareholders, bringing it closer to all segments of society. This achievement further reinforces the Bank’s standing as a trusted financial partner that combines innovation with social responsibility in delivering best-in-class financial products and services.

Kuwait hosts 175th meeting of Arab Energy Organization

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13, (KUNA): The State of Kuwait hosted on Friday the 175th meeting of the executive office of the Arab Energy Organization (AEO), held as a prelude to the 115th ministerial meeting due on Sunday.

The organization, (formerly OAEPEC), said in a statement the meeting was chaired by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Oil Undersecretary Sheikh Dr. Nimr Fahad Al-Sabah, the State of Kuwait representative at the bureau.

Kuwait is currently chair of the office meetings.

The statement said that the conferees discussed the 2026 projected budget and the AEO restructuring plan, in addition to a host of other bureaucratic topics.

They lauded the State of Kuwait Government for tackling difficulties facing the efforts to attain the set goals.

Sheikh Dr. Nimr meanwhile stressed on the necessity to boost coordination among the member states and bolster the organization’s role in the shadow rapid changes in the regional and international energy sectors.

As part of its continuous strategy to boost its customers’ digital banking experience

KIB introduces major enhancements to its Mobile App, expanding customer convenience and control

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) has announced a new wave of enhancements to its KIB Mobile App, marking another step in its ongoing efforts to deliver smarter, more accessible banking solutions while further enriching its customers’ digital banking experience. The latest updates are designed to provide customers with greater flexibility, personalization, and control, reaffirming the Bank’s commitment to offering seamless and secure digital services and to developing innovative, user-focused solutions that fit modern lifestyles.

The refreshed KIB Mobile App now features a redesigned homepage with an intuitive, user-friendly interface that makes navigation easier, and an overall experience tailored to each user’s preferences.

KIB has also launched a new Donate as You Spend feature, enabling customers to automatically contribute to charitable organizations with every purchase they make. This feature empowers users to give back effortlessly, integrating social responsibility into everyday spending and reinforcing KIB’s role in supporting the community.

The Dormant Account Reactivation feature offers customers the convenience of reactivating inactive accounts instantly through the app, without the need for branch visits or additional paperwork, giving customers full control over their banking activities from anywhere.

To further simplify administrative tasks, KIB has also introduced a digital salary transfer certificate,



Nawaf Al-Khrayef

allowing customers to instantly generate and download official documents directly from the app.

With the new Transfer and Card Limit Management options, customers can set, modify, and monitor their transaction and card limits in real time. This added flexibility enhances both security and financial control, allowing users to tailor their banking experience according to their personal needs and comfort levels.

KIB has also introduced a Kids Account Management feature that gives parents greater oversight and control of their children’s accounts, while supporting financial learning and responsibility from an early age.

Another enhancement to the KIB Mobile App is the integration of Western Union services that allows for convenient international money transfers, while the new Visa Click to Pay function en-



Khalid Al-Sumait

ables faster and more secure online purchases in line with global best practices.

Commenting on the new updates, Nawaf Al-Khrayef, Deputy General Manager of the Retail Banking Department, said: “At KIB, we’re continuously finding new ways to make digital banking easier, safer, and more personalized. The latest app upgrade reflects KIB’s ongoing investment in cutting-edge digital infrastructure. Our focus was to give customers a technically powerful app that works seamlessly with fewer steps, stronger authentication, and minimal downtime. By enhancing security frameworks, integrating global payment solutions, and automating key services, we are enabling faster, safer, and more effortless interactions across every touchpoint.”

Al-Khrayef added: “These enhancements were developed to

give customers greater control over managing their finances. Our goal is to make every interaction with KIB, from mobile banking to ATMs and customer support, reliable and intuitive. This milestone reflects our continuous journey to create a customer experience that saves time, empowers financial decisions, and keeps pace with Kuwait’s dynamic lifestyle.”

From his side Khalid Al-Sumait, Executive Manager –Core Digital Factory at KIB, stated: “Every feature in this release was thoughtfully designed around real customer behavior and the modern Kuwaiti lifestyle. We wanted to create an experience that genuinely supports how customers spend, manage, and plan their financial lives.”

He emphasized that “Whether it’s empowering parents through our Kids Account Management tool, encouraging community impact with Donate as You Spend, or simplifying tasks through instant certificates and smarter controls, our aim is to put intuitive, meaningful tools at our users’ fingertips. As part of our digital enhancement strategy, we will continue building a personalized, intuitive journey that empowers KIB customers.”

Through the continuous development of its digital infrastructure and customer-centric design, KIB is enhancing the way people manage their finances. Each update reinforces the Bank’s long-term vision of creating a more connected, convenient, and forward-thinking banking experience for everyone, stemming from its main slogan ‘Bank for Life’.

In line with its commitment to Diraya campaign

KFH warns against unverified online links

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) advises customers to stay cautious about a new phishing scam targeting their bank accounts and stealing their funds. KFH warning is part of its continuous support for Diraya campaign, which aims to promote banking awareness, in collaboration with the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) and the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA).

In its press release, KFH stated that the new form of online scam involves sending a message with a suspicious link tricking victims to click the link to visit a particular website or participate in a survey. Once they click the link, their devices will be hacked, enabling the hacker to access and exploit their personal data for harmful purposes.



KFH urged customers to stay vigilant and refrain from disclosing their personal information to requests received through e-mails, text messages, or phone calls, as they are attempts to obtain customers’ banking information to steal their funds or data.

KFH advised customers to be careful when receiving links as these links could lead to theft of sensitive banking information. The bank also recommended that customers protect their bank accounts by avoiding the storage of confidential information, such as card numbers or passwords, on their mobile phones. Additionally, customers were urged not to share their OTP with anyone and to log out of the bank’s application or website promptly after finishing a transaction.



The executive management of the National Bank of Kuwait, along with the strategic partners of the race.

With more than 7,000 racers and a massive audience at the 31st edition

NBK Run reinforces its status as Kuwait’s largest sporting event

Al-Mattar:

- NBK Run this year witnessed unprecedented participation and unparalleled success.
- NBK Run is the largest family entertainment rally in Kuwait and a unique platform through which positive values are promoted.
- The race’s goals are well aligned with the national directions that strive to achieve sustainable growth in health and sports.
- NBK is keen to move forward in its journey of adopting and supporting various events that encourage effective and influential change behavior
- 18 winners were crowned in the top three places in the 5, 10, and 21 km races, receiving valuable cash prizes.
- Equate sponsored the category for people with disabilities and presented 50 cash prizes to the top five finishers in five categories for men and women.
- Al-Babtain Group sponsored the prizes for the top three finishers in the 21 km race for men and women.
- Ooredoo presented iPhone 17 devices, Apple Watches, and Shamel Plans to the winners.
- Chips electronics from Chayah Group presented special Apple packages.
- Intersport presented shopping vouchers worth KD 150 to first-place winners.



KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Amid a festive atmosphere and sheer enthusiasm, National Bank of Kuwait held the NBK Run for the year 2025 yesterday, Saturday. The 31st edition of the race witnessed the participation of more than 7,000 racers and a massive audience, which reinforces the bank’s position as the largest sporting event in Kuwait, and confirms once again its ability to launch successful events that are always met with broad participation and strong trust from society.

The closing ceremony of the race included exceptional events and various entertainment segments that were well received by the attendees and participants. During the ceremony, 18 winners were crowned in the top three places for distances of 5, 10 and 21 km for both women and men.

The event was attended by Mr. Isam Al Sager, Vice Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), Ms. Shaikha Al Bahar, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer of NBK, Mr. Salah Al Fulaifi, Chief Executive Officer of NBK – Kuwait, Mr. Sulaiman Al Marzouq, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of NBK – Kuwait, and Mr. Faisal Al Hamad, Chief Executive Officer of NBK Wealth Group, along with a number of executive management team. In addition to Mr. Nasser Al-Dosari, Chief Executive Officer of EQUATE Petrochemical Company, Mr. Saleh Al Babtain, Chief Executive Officer of Al Babtain Group, Mr. Abdulaziz Al Babtain, Chief Executive Officer of Ooredoo Kuwait, Mr. Anwar Al Hlailah, Chief Executive Officer of Touristic Enterprises Company, Mr. Abdulmohsen Al Babtain, Chief Executive Officer of Groupxen, Mr. Mohammed Al Salem, Chief Executive Officer of Chayah Group, Mr. Rashed Al Munae, Chief Executive Officer of United Beverage Company, and Mr. Khaled Al Mutawa, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Ali Abdulwahab Al Mutawa Commercial Co.

On this occasion, Ms. Manal Al-Mattar, EVP - Head of Group Corporate Communications at National Bank of Kuwait, noted that NBK Run is the largest family entertainment rally in Kuwait, mentioning as well that the goals of this race are well aligned with the national directions that strives to achieve sustainable development, especially in the fields of health and sports.

Al-Mattar pointed out that NBK Run is no longer just a sporting event; rather, it is a symbol of community solidarity and a powerful message through which NBK calls all society segments and age groups to exercise and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

Furthermore, Al-Mattar added: “Organizing this major sporting festival in its 31st edition, with unprecedented participation and unparalleled success, reflects NBK’s strong commitment towards society and its firm belief that the role of sports goes beyond achieving physical strength, to actually spreading positive values such as cooperation, determination, and perseverance.

In her statement, Al-Mattar praised the efforts made by various entities, institutions, and organizations that believed in the goals of NBK Run and contributed to the success of this year’s edition: Al-Babtain Group, Ooredoo, Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Company, Equate



Photos during the event.

Petrochemical Company, Chayah Group, the Touristic Enterprises Company, United Beverage Company, and Spark Athletic Center.

She also commended the ongoing cooperation from the Emergency Medical Services Department at the Ministry of Health, the General Fire Department, the Ministry of Interior, Kuwait Municipality, and the Touristic Enterprises Company, along with suffix, the organizing company, and the race’s media partner Prismic.

Finally, Al-Mattar concluded her speech by saying: “Because health and sports awareness is foundational for building a healthy society, and because adopting a healthy lifestyle is the first step towards achieving true social development, NBK will continue to move forward in its journey of adopting and supporting various events that encourage effective and influential change behavior, namely as this grand sporting event which we are proud to have as one of our most important and largest social initiatives”.

New Categories Added

This year’s 31st edition of NBK Run witnessed the introduction of a 21 km distance for the first time, in addition to the 10 km and 5 km distances. The aim of this move is to diversify participation options to cater to different physical abilities and open the door for a wider range of racers, whether amateur or professional, to participate in this great sporting festival, which enhances the spirit of challenge and competition.

Also, new two groups were added to the 2.5km race for people with disabilities, bringing the total number of

groups in this paralympic category to five, up from three last year, for both men and women.

This year’s NBK Run groups for people with disabilities include wheelchair users, partially blind participants, totally blind participants, leg amputees, and individuals with hearing impairments.

18 Champions

At the conclusion of this year’s Run, NBK crowned 18 winners, both genders, across the participating categories. The winners of the top three places in the 21 km distance were awarded with cash prizes of KD 1200, KD 1000 and KD 700 respectively. The winners of the first places in the 10 km distance received cash prizes of KD 1000, KD 700 and KD 500 respectively, while the winners of the first places in the 5 km distance were given cash prizes of KD 500, KD 400 and KD 300 respectively.

Al-Babtain Group Sponsored the 21 km Distance Awards

Maintaining a 15-year long strategic partnership with NBK, Al-Babtain Group sponsored cash prizes for the top three finishers in the 21km distance. For both men and women, the prize is KD 1200 for first place, KD 1000 for second place, and KD 700 for third place, with a total of KD 5,800.

Equate Offered 40 Cash Prizes for People with Disabilities

For the second year in a row, Equate Petrochemical Company sponsored the NBK Run for people with dis-

abilities, adding two new groups of participants in this paralympic category this year to include wheelchair users, partially blind participants, totally blind participants, leg amputees, and individuals with hearing impairments, for both men and women.

Equate presented cash prizes to the top five winners in the five groups (50 cash prizes), with KD 500 for first place, KD 400 for second place, KD 300 for third place, and KD 200 for both fourth and fifth place in each group.

Ooredoo presented exclusive prizes to the top winners in the 5 km, 10 km, and 21 km races, for both men and women.

The first-place winners received an iPhone 17 and a six-month unlimited subscription to Shamel Plan, while the second and third-place winners received the latest Apple Watch and a six-month unlimited subscription to Shamel Plan.

Shopping Vouchers by Intersport

Ali Abdulwahab Al-Mutawa Company, represented by its brand “Intersport”, gave shopping vouchers worth KD 150 to all the winners of first place in the distances of 5, 10 and 21 km.

Spark Athletic Center Subscriptions

Spark Athletic Center presented prizes to the top three winners in the 5, 10 and 21 km distances for men and women, as follows:

- First place: 6-month membership at Spark Gym + 1-year membership at Spark Run Club.
- Second place: 3-month membership at Spark Gym + 6-month membership at Spark Run Club.
- Third place: 1-month membership at Spark Gym + 3-month membership at Spark Run Club.

Apple Watches for First Place Winners from United Beverage Company

United Beverage Company joined NBK’s strategic partners this year’s race, bringing Apple Watches to all first-place winners in the 5, 10, and 21 km races, and participating in activities and events on the sidelines of the race.

“Apple Family” Boxes from Chips

As part of its strategic partnership with NBK in this year’s race, Chayah Group presented two prizes through its Chips Store on the sidelines of the NBK Village events and activities, which consisted of an “Apple Family” box containing most of the “Apple” products (iPhone 17 – iPad – Apple Watch).

The Touristic Enterprises Company: Winter Wonderland Tickets and Al-Khiran Chalets

The Touristic Enterprises Company provided 14,000 entry tickets to the Winter Wonderland, which were distributed along with race kits to all participants in this year’s NBK Run.

The company also participated in the NBK Village events and activities, offering three prizes for a weekend getaway at Al-Khiran Resort chalets.

Continued on Page 11



The bank’s executive management with the NBK Run team.



Isam Al Sager at the starting point of the race for the disabled category.



Shaikha Al Bahar and Salah Al Fulaij



Shaikha Al Bahar and Nasser Al-Dosari

Continued from Page 10

NBK Awards Top Three Winners in 6 Age Categories

As part of its unwavering commitment to encouraging sports and fostering a spirit of positive competition across all society’s segments, NBK announced for the first time in the history of the NBK Run the awarding of cash prizes to the top three winners in six age categories of both genders, in acknowledgement of their achievements and to encourage them to continue to adopt a healthy lifestyle.

The bank will also hold a special ceremony to award the 108 winners, distributed across the following age categories:

- Under 18 years old
- 18 to 34 years old
- 35 to 44 years old
- 45 to 54 years old
- 55 to 64 years old
- 65 years and above.

This new initiative confirms the bank’s commitment to supporting society, further highlighting how sports bridge between generations and promote challenge and creativity.

Warm-up Amid Enthusiasm

Before the starting whistle, NBK prepared a program to help the racers warm up before the race, with the participation of physical trainers Salah Al-Shatti and Mohammed Darwish and the singer Daffy, whose participation added an enthusiastic atmosphere that encouraged the racers to compete and get into the race atmosphere.

NBK Volunteers

At NBK Village, the NBK volunteers were deployed at strategic points along the race route before the starting whistle blew, and the necessary preventive and health measures were taken to ensure the safety of the racers in cooperation with the Ministry of Health’s paramedics and medical emergency teams.

High Turnout

Thousands of runners completed the race in its three categories (5, 10, and 21 km). Participants gathered along the starting line at Kuwait Towers before the race began, under the watchful eyes of NBK volunteers, paramedics, and Ministry of Interior personnel



Shaikha Al Bahar shakes hands with Salman Alajmi, Vice President of Technical Services at Equate, in the presence of Nasser Al-Dosari

A Big Thank You

National Bank of Kuwait extends its sincere thanks and heartfelt appreciation to all the entities and institutions whose efforts were instrumental in the success of this year’s NBK Run. The Ministry of Interior and the Emergency Medical Services Department at the Ministry of Health provided support to the race participants, and the Ministry of Interior deployed patrols along the race route to the towers to ensure the smooth running of the event. Meanwhile, Kuwait Municipality and the Touristic Enterprises Company provided the venue for the closing ceremony at Kuwait Towers.



Isam Al Sager with the men of the Ministry of Interior.

to ensure the smooth running and safety of all participants. Water breaks were also provided along the race route on the Arabian Gulf Street, and at the finish line, volunteers and organizers were on hand to welcome the runners and distribute water and refreshments.

Musical Performance

The race’s closing ceremony featured a special touch, reflecting NBK’s commitment to presenting this important event in the best way possible, always striving to live up to the trust of its community and customers. A modern and distinctive stage was designed to crown the winners of this year’s NBK Run. Attendees also enjoyed a musical performance by singers Daffy and Flipperachi, creating an interactive and enthusiastic atmosphere.

Live Streaming

From the early morning hours, several media channels and websites covered the event, and NBK’s Communications followed up and provided comprehensive coverage from the start of the race until the end and broadcast the awards ceremony on all the bank’s social media channels.

NBK Village

The race village (NBK Village) saw the participation of numerous institutions and companies from various sectors, including food, sports, entertainment, and health, who showcased their products and services to the crowds attending this year’s NBK Run.

NBK Run 2025 Demographics Summary:

Race Categories

- Total: 7117
- 5KM: 5000
- 10KM: 1600
- 21KM Half Marathon: 400
- Para-Athlete: 117

Gender Breakdown

- Male: 58%
- Female: 42%

Age Metrics

- Minimum Age: 10
- Maximum Age: 85
- Average Age: 33.1



Isam Al Sager and Nasser Al-Dosari during the honoring of the winner of first place in the blind category.



Isam Al Sager and Nasser Al-Dosari during the honoring of the winners in the wheelchair category.



Faisal Al Hamad, Mohammed Al Salem, and Anwar Al Hlailah during the honoring of the winners in the 5 km category.



Salah Al Fulaij and Khaled Al Mutawa during the honoring of the winners in the 10 km category.



Sulaiman Al Marzouq, Abdulmohsen Al Babtain, and Rashed Al Munae during the honoring of the winners in the 5 km category.



Shaikha Al Bahar and Saleh Al Babtain during the honoring of the winners in category 21.



Shaikha Al Bahar and Saleh Al Babtain during the honoring of one of the winners in the 21 km category.



Salah Al Fulaij and Abdulaziz Al Babtain during the honoring of the winners in the 10 km category.

Kuwait shares heritage globally through loaned ancient artifacts

Kuwait showcases Al-Sabah Collection at Mumbai’s ‘Networks of the Past’ exhibition



Key pieces on display.



Exclusive artifacts from the exhibition collection.



Notable artifacts on display.



Key pieces on display.

NEW DELHI, Dec 13, (KUNA): The Al-Sabah Archaeological Collection under the Dar al-Athar Al-Islamiyah in Kuwait participated on Friday in the opening ceremony of the “Networks of the Past” gallery.

The gallery, called a “Study Gallery of India and the Ancient World”, was organized by the Chhatrapati Shivaji Museum of Maharajah Vastu Sangrahalaya in the Indian city of Mumbai.

In a statement to KUNA, on the occasion Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Dr. Mohammed Khaled Al-Jassar, who is heading the Kuwait team said, “the National Council is proud to support the Dar al-Athar Al-Islamiyah which serves as an ambassador for Kuwait cultural diplomacy globally.

We also appreciate the Minister of Information and Culture, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi for supporting this heritage, which represents Kuwait’s cultural identity and human beauty.

The participation of the Al-Sabah Collection has received unique global recognition due to its significant artistic and historical value. We extend our thanks to Dar al-Athar Al-Islamiyah and to its Director General, Sheikh Hessa Sabah Al-Salem, for making these rare treasures available to share with major international museums.”

The exhibition is part of a global cultural initiative coming as a result of years of collaboration between major international museums, aiming to reinterpret human history from a perspective that highlights the interconnectedness of civilisations across the ages.

Apart from Dr Mohammed Khaled Al-Jassar, who is heading the Kuwait team on behalf of the Minister of Information and Culture, Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi, Consul General of the State of Kuwait in Mumbai, Emad Abdulaziz Al-Kharraz, Director of the Al-Sabah Archaeological Collection, Salam Qawqji and an official delegation from Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyah, the Al-Sabah Archaeological Collection were also present.

This participation underscores Kuwait’s prominent position on the global cultural scene.



Left: The House of Islamic Art and Al-Sabah Collection delegation attending the exhibition opening. Right: Delegates from the House of Islamic Art and the Al-Sabah Antiquities Collection.

This exhibition, highlighting pivotal moments in the development of human civilization, offers a fresh educational and cultural perspective, beginning with the Indus Valley Civilization (Harappan), continuing through the ancient states of Egypt, Greece, and China, and culminating in the cultural interactions that shaped the ancient world.

The Al-Sabah Archaeological Collection is a major contributor to this project. The exhibition’s official video describes Kuwait’s participation as part of a network of partnerships extending to the British Museum, the Berlin Museums, the Rietberg Museum in Zurich, and other international institutions.

The collaboration spanning more than four years was instrumental in bringing the exhibition to its current form.

This participation received special attention from the



KUNA photos

Director General of the Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyah, and co-owner of the Al-Sabah Archaeological Collection, Sheikh Hessa Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, who appreciated participation in the event in Mumbai.

She emphasized the importance of establishing a global presence, reflecting the vision and mission of her late husband, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who held a clear vision aimed at disseminating beauty, art, history, and human heritage to the world.

Kuwait’s contribution to this exhibition is highlighted by the loan of eleven rare artifacts from the Al-Sabah Collection, considered among the most important material evidence of cultural exchange in the ancient world.

These pieces represent civilizations spanning from the Iranian Plateau to the Oxus Valley and the Hellenistic world, thus reinforcing the exhibition’s message of cultural interconnectedness of peoples.

Among the artifacts on loan from the Al-Sabah Archaeological Collection to the exhibition are a gilded tablet from the Oxus Valley civilization dating back to the 4th century BC, and a silver dish with a gilt center from the Eastern Hellenistic period (3rd-2nd centuries BC).

The collection also includes silver and glass vessels from eastern Iran dating from the 4th-3rd centuries BC and others from the 5th century AD.

The loan also includes pieces that exemplify the high artistic skill of craftsmen from the 2nd-3rd century BC.

These selected works offer visitors a rare opportunity to explore successive artistic periods, revealing the depth of Eastern civilisations and their connection to the ancient world.

The Kuwait delegation, headed by Al-Jassar and including the museum’s curator and the director of the Al-Sabah Archaeological Collection Salam Qawqji, media supervisor at the National Council for Culture Shurooq Al-Qaffas, media officer for the Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyah Al-Jazi Al-Sanafi, researcher in Islamic history at the Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyah Dana Al-Mayyal, senior chemistry specialist responsible for assembling the artworks, Abdulaziz Al-Duwaish, will participate in a series of cultural and educational activities, including the opening of the Nalanda Learning Center, scientific and dialogue tours, and field visits.

The active engagements of the Kuwait delegation will make Kuwait’s presence an integral part of the joint international effort.

‘What Is Not Mine’ wins top award

KUWAIT, Dec 13, (KUNA): The play “What Is Not Mine,” by the Gulf Arab Theater Troupe, won Best Integrated Theatrical Performance at the closing of the 25th Kuwait Theater Festival at Dasma Theater.

The production also received awards for Best Direction, Best Leading Actor, Best Decor, and Best Sound Effects.

The Arena Company’s play Hosh Atwan won three awards, including Best Costumes, Best Supporting Actor, and Best Leading Actress.

At the same time, they and Their Remnants by the Kuwait Theater Troupe won Best Lighting, Best Supporting Actress, and Best Playwriting.

Festival jury chairman Dr. Ali Haidar said the evaluations were based on artistic criteria, including script quality, direction, acting, and scenography.

Jury member Dr. Hisham Zein Al-Din emphasized the need for safe performance environments and reducing dependence on artificial intelligence in theater production.

Six troupes competed in the festival, organized by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) under the patronage of Minister of Information and Culture Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi.



Group photo of the winners of the 25th Kuwait Theater Festival Awards.



Assistant Secretary-General for the Arts sector at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters and Festival President, Musaed Al-Zamil



Alaa Al-Muqsaid receives Best Sound Effects Design award.

Archaeology



A glimpse of the archaeological discoveries.

Egypt: Remains of King Nyuserre’s Valley Temple uncovered

CAIOR, Dec 13, (KUNA): Egypt’s Ministry of Tourism and Archeology has announced the discovery of the remains of the Valley Temple belonging to the solar complex of King Nyuserre, one of the Fifth Dynasty’s most prominent rulers, during the ongoing excavation in the Abusir archaeological area in Giza Governorate, west of Egypt.

In a statement, the ministry added that the step comes as part of the Italian mission excavation in Abu Ghurab in Abusir.

The mission, led by Massimiliano



KUNA photos

Above, left & right: Highlights of the archaeological discoveries.



Smoking Fewer Cigarettes is Not Enough to Reduce the Harm Caused by Smoking



Whether it concerns climate change or modern medicine, the spread of misinformation continues to have a detrimental effect on society. As well as being difficult to identify, these false narratives often lead to confusion and further harm as the result of not well-informed decisions. When it comes to cigarette smoking, a number of these myths are still around.

One such myth is the insinuation that smoking fewer cigarettes will reduce harm caused by smoking. This simply isn't the case—there's no safe level of cigarette use. Smoking even a small amount can cause damage to your body, which is why smokers concerned about

their health should seek advice and support to quit tobacco and nicotine products altogether. Put simply, the only way to eliminate further risk of harm is to quit smoking for good.

There are more than 6,000 chemicals in cigarette smoke, around 100 of which have been identified by public health authorities as harmful or potentially harmful. Many wrongly believe nicotine presents the greatest health risk related to smoking, but while addictive and not risk-free, nicotine is not the primary cause of smoking-related diseases—the high levels of harmful and potentially harmful chemicals in the smoke generated by combustion are.

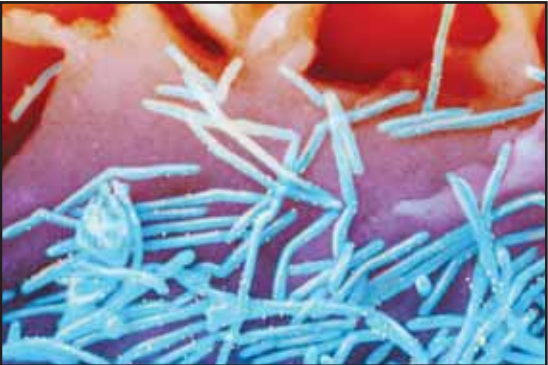
Those who don't quit might wish to explore alternatives to continued smoking that avoid burning tobacco. Scientifically substantiated smoke-free products that do not produce smoke can reduce the levels of harmful chemicals compared to cigarettes, making them a better alternative for adults compared to continued smoking. They are not risk-free and provide nicotine, which is addictive, but are better for adults than continuing to smoke.

While nicotine is not the primary cause of smoking-related disease, it is addictive and not risk-free. Certain people should not use products that contain nicotine. This includes preg-

nant or breastfeeding women and people with heart disease, severe high blood pressure, or diabetes. Minors should not use or have access to tobacco or nicotine-containing products.

Separating fact from fiction helps us make informed decisions in our lives. Moving away from cigarettes is a positive step in whatever form that takes—the best choice is to quit altogether, but for those who won't, exploring smoke-free options can present a better alternative to continued smoking.

Sponsored by Philip Morris Kuwait Company W.L.L.



This electron microscope image provided by the National Institutes of Health shows human respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) virions, colored blue, and anti-RSV F protein/gold antibodies, colored yellow, shedding from the surface of human lung cells. (AP)

Severe cases ahead Winter virus season so far is not too bad

NEW YORK, Dec 13, (AP) — It may feel like you are surrounded by sniffles and coughs, but flu season activity is still low in many parts of the U.S.

New government data posted Friday shows that as of last week, flu activity was high in four states - Colorado, Louisiana, New Jersey and New York - and minimal or low in most others. Severity indicators are increasing but are still within the boundaries of a "mild" season, said officials at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A number of diseases tend to peak in the winter, thanks to indoor gatherings that help germs spread. The list includes not only colds and flu but also norovirus - a highly infectious cause of vomiting and diarrhea. Norovirus cases have generally been trending up in the last month.

Here are three seasonal respiratory viruses that experts are keeping an eye on:

Last flu season was bad, with the overall flu hospitalization rate the highest since the H1N1 flu pandemic 15 years ago. With the addition of a late-reported case, child flu deaths reached 288, the worst recorded for regular U.S. flu season and the same number seen in the 2009-2010 flu pandemic.

This season's first pediatric flu death was reported this week.

There are reasons to fear this winter might be bad.

One type of flu virus - called A H3N2 - historically has caused the most hospitalizations and deaths in older people. So far this season, that's the type most frequently reported. Even more concerning, 89% of the H3N2 infections analyzed were a new version - known as the subclade K variant - that differs from the strain in this year's flu shots.

Flu seasons often don't peak until around February, so it's too early to know how big a problem that mismatch will be.

The CDC recommends that everyone 6 months and older get an annual vaccination, and public health experts say it's not too late. About 42% of U.S. adults and 41% of children have gotten flu shots this season, according to CDC data.

The shots may not prevent all symptoms but they can prevent many infections from becoming severe. That appears to be true for this year's shot, according to a preliminary U.K. analysis.

Respiratory syncytial virus is a common cause of cold-like symptoms. But it can be dangerous for infants and the elderly, and is known for filling hospitals with wheezing babies every fall and winter.

RSV seasons typically peak by December or January, but the season seems to be starting later than usual reported cases so far have been relatively low, according to the CDC.

The Conversation

Sleep problems and depression can be a vicious cycle, especially during pregnancy

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.

By Jenalee Doom and Melissa Nevarez-Brewster,
University of Denver

Imagine you got a rough night of sleep. Perhaps you went to bed too late, needed to wake up early or still felt tired when you woke up from what should have been a full night's sleep.

For the rest of the day, you feel groggy and unfocused. Things that are usually fun or exciting don't give you the same level of pleasure. You don't have energy to exercise, so you avoid it. You don't feel motivated to see friends, so you cancel plans with them. You focus on your rough day as you try to fall asleep that night and start to have anxiety about the next day. Instead of getting the restful night of sleep you need, you have another night of poor sleep. You become caught in a vicious cycle of poor sleep and depressed mood.

Sleep and mental health problems often go hand in hand. Sleep problems are a core symptom of depression. In addition, there is strong evidence that sleep problems contribute to many mental health disorders, including schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD.

Yet our mental health also affects how well we sleep. Issues such as distressing thoughts and trouble relaxing can make it difficult for people to fall asleep or stay asleep, exacerbating sleep problems.

These issues are particularly pronounced during pregnancy, when the circular effects of inadequate sleep and mental health challenges can have harmful effects for mothers and their offspring.

We are a developmental psychologist and a doctoral student in psychology who study sleep and mental health from pregnancy through adulthood. As researchers in this field, we see the impacts of sleep and mental health problems firsthand.

Sleep and mental health problems are so entangled that it is unsurprising that they can each make the other worse. But it does make treating them more challenging.

Researchers and medical professionals know that sleep is essential for the body and brain to function properly.

Sleep is important for establishing circadian rhythms, which optimize alertness during the day and rest at night. When sunlight fades in the evening, the brain produces more of the hormone melatonin, and your core body temperature drops to promote sleep. When the brain detects sunlight, it reduces melatonin production, and body temperature increases to promote wakefulness.

Although light and dark are the most important signals to the brain about when you should be awake and when you should be sleeping, other things such as stress, disruptions in daily routines and social interactions can also throw off your circadian rhythm.

Circadian rhythms affect other important biological processes, including the body's production of the stress



Restless or too little sleep can make us feel unfocused and indecisive the next day.

hormone cortisol. Cortisol follows a daily rhythm where it is highest soon after waking in the morning and lowest in the middle of the night. Disruptions in normal sleep can lead to difficulties in daily regulation of cortisol levels, which can have negative effects on mental health and the ability to effectively manage stress.

Sleep is central to the proper functioning of the immune system, which in turn has implications for mental and physical health. Sleep disturbances have been linked to poorer immune responses against viruses and other challenges to the immune system, making it harder to stay healthy and to recover after getting sick.

Sleep disturbances also lead to greater inflammation, which is when the immune system's natural responses become overactive. Inflammation underlies mental and physical health problems, including depression, heart disease and cancer.

Chronic disruptions to a person's natural circadian rhythm - such as people who work night shifts or who switch between day and night shifts - lead to greater risk for both depression and anxiety.

Shift work is an extreme example of disrupting the natural pattern of sleeping at night. However, less severe types of sleep problems, such as not getting enough sleep or waking up feeling tired, are also bad for mental health.

Sleep disruptions make it more difficult to regulate emotions. Having too little or poor quality sleep make handling everyday stressors more difficult. This is because sufficient sleep is necessary for effective problem-solving, memory and focusing. The combination of impaired emotion regulation and stress management abilities are a recipe for greater mental health difficulties.

One key reason why poor sleep and mental health struggles can become so problematic and difficult to treat is that without adequate sleep, it's challenging to muster energy for healthy activities such as exercise and maintaining social relationships.

What's more, when decision-making is impaired by poor sleep and negative emotions, people are more likely to reach for alcohol, drugs and unhealthy foods to cope with stress. These unhealthy behaviors can, in turn, reinforce the cycle by interfering with sleep.

These cycles between poor sleep and mental health challenges can be especially problematic during pregnancy.

Common pregnancy symptoms include nausea, heartburn, back and joint pain, cramps, a frequent urge to pee and contractions, all of which can make it more difficult to get restful sleep.

Sadly, around 76% of pregnant women report having sleep problems at some point in their pregnancy, compared with only 33% in the general population. Relatedly, about 1 in 5 pregnant women in the U.S. struggle with mental health problems such as anxiety and depression.

Our team's new research, published in December 2025, further establishes these links between sleep and mental health. We found that during pregnancy, mental health problems contribute to sleep problems over time and that sleep problems in turn can exacerbate mental health problems.

This cycle can also have negative effects on the fetus and on the child after birth.

Prenatal sleep problems such as short sleep, sleep apnea and restless sleep can lead to preterm births and low birth weight in newborns.

A large study in Sweden in 2021 found that pregnant women who frequently worked the night shift or quickly shifted between night and day work in early pregnancy showed a three-to-four times greater risk for having a preterm birth. Preterm birth and low birthweight are associated with greater cardiovascular risk in both mothers and their offspring.

Prenatal maternal sleep problems can also lead to problems later in the child's development. A review we also published in 2025 found that children of mothers who had sleep problems in pregnancy tend to have more sleep problems themselves. Our review also reported that children of mothers with prenatal sleep problems are more likely to develop obesity and have more behavioral problems in childhood.

In our opinion, it should be standard to screen for sleep problems at medical visits, given the potential implications of inadequate sleep for both mothers and their babies. If you're close to someone who is pregnant, consider asking how their sleep is and how they're feeling. If they note ongoing sleep issues or emotional or behavior changes, you can ask if they have talked to their doctor.

They may feel overwhelmed and need support in talking to their doctor or help finding resources. The Sleep Foundation's website has a list of sleeping tips for pregnant women as well as guidelines for when to speak with a doctor.

If you are the person experiencing these issues, you can report sleep problems to your doctor and ask for guidance for improving sleep.

If you're experiencing difficulties with depression or anxiety, tell your doctor and ask for resources. There are mental health resources specific to pregnancy that can help. You can also find mental health professionals through Psychology Today's find-a-therapist tool.

Healthy sleep is a necessity for improving your mental health during pregnancy and at all times of life. (AP)

FIFA’s World Cup pricing sparks global fan anger

Ticket prices branded a ‘monumental betrayal’

WASHINGTON, Dec 13, (AP): Soccer fans have accused FIFA of a “monumental betrayal” after latest prices for World Cup tickets began to circulate.

The governing body allocates 8% of tickets to national associations for games involving their team to sell to the most loyal fans. And a list published by the German soccer federation revealed prices ranged from \$180-\$700 for varying group stage games. The lowest price for the final was \$4,185 and the highest was \$8,680. Those group-stage prices are very different from FIFA’s claims of \$60 tickets being available, while the target from United States soccer officials when bidding for the tournament seven years ago was to offer hundreds of thousands of \$21 seats across the opening phase of games. Fan organization Football Supporters Europe (FSE) described the current prices as “extortionate.”

“This is a monumental betrayal of the tradition of the World Cup, ignoring the contribution of supporters to the spectacle it is,” it said in a statement. The English Football Association shared pricing information with the England Supporters Travel Club (ESTC) on Thursday evening, which showed that if a fan bought a ticket for every game through to the final it would cost just over \$7,000. FIFA said in September that tickets released through its website would initially range from \$60 for group-stage matches to \$6,730 for the final. But those prices are subject to change as it adopts dynamic pricing for the first time at the World Cup. FIFA tickets are available in four categories, with the best seats in Category 1. In the price list published by the German federation, there were only three categories. The lowest priced ticket was \$180 for Germany’s opening group game against Curacao in Houston. The lowest price for the semifinal was \$920 rising to \$1,125.



In this file photo, FIFA President Gianni Infantino pauses during the match schedule reveal for the 2026 soccer World Cup in Washington. (AP)

The FSE called on FIFA to immediately halt ticket sales via national associations “until a solution that respects the tradition, universality, and cultural significance of the World Cup is found.” The Associated Press approached FIFA for comment. FIFA launched its third phase of widespread ticket sales Thursday, with

fans now able to apply for specific matches for the first time through its “Random Selection Draw.” Following last week’s draw for the 2026 tournament, which will be co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico, an updated schedule has been published. That means fans know when and where the likes of Lionel Messi and Argentina will play. Previous ticket ballots were blind as the qualification period had not even been completed and the draw was yet to take place. Now participating nations have been placed in groups, with their paths through the tournament determined. For instance, Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo could go on to meet in the quarterfinals in Kansas City if both Argentina and Portugal top their respective groups. Not that fans are guaranteed to get tickets to the games they apply for. The draw opened Dec. 11 at 11 a.m. ET (1600 GMT) and closes Jan. 13, 2026. FIFA says ticket applications can be made at any point during this window and the timing of entry will not impact the chances of success. Fans can apply via FIFA’s website for a maximum of four tickets per household per match and a maximum of 40 tickets throughout the tournament. Fans will need a FIFA ID to apply for tickets and can pick which matches and which pricing category they want to apply for. Successful applicants will be notified by email in February and charged automatically. The last time the U.S. hosted the World Cup in 1994 prices ranged from \$25 to \$475. In Qatar in 2022 prices ranged from around \$70 to \$1,600 when ticket details were announced. Tickets for the final at MetLife Stadium on July 19 are already going for in excess of \$11,000 on secondary resale sites. For this tournament FIFA has also set up its own resale platform where it charges a 15% fee based on the total resale price. FIFA said that closer to the tournament any remaining tickets will go on general sale on a first-come, first-served basis. It did not reveal a time frame for the release of those remaining tickets.

The benchmark keeps moving

Gilles and Poirier shake off disappointment before Oly

TORONTO, Dec 13, (AP): Piper Gilles shook her head as the scores popped up on the screen. She and Paul Poirier had just delivered their cleanest free dance of the season at the Grand Prix Final in Nagoya, Japan. The kind of skate that has landed the Canadian duo on the world championship podium three years in a row. Yet the judges saw it differently - and the marks weren’t enough to bring home a medal. “It definitely is disheartening. We can’t lie, we’re human,” Gilles said. “We skated two successful programs, and we emotionally and physically felt so in shape and powerful in those moments, (only) to kind of be left questioning what we’re doing. Is it enough?” The veteran ice dancers dropped from third after the rhythm dance to fourth following the free, finishing 0.06 points behind British pair Lilah Fear and Lewis Gibson in the season’s first head-to-head competition between the world’s top six teams. After the event, Gilles posted a quote on social media about athletic truths being “diminished and manipulated by people with agendas,” and tagged the International Skating Union. Her husband, Nathan Kelly, replied to an ISU Instagram post saying he was disillusioned with the results. And even the Gilles’ dog account chimed in, siding with another dog account that questioned the judging. A couple days later, Gilles addressed her fans directly, saying she was grateful for her team, partner, family and supporters despite the disappointing result. “The ISU and the state of ice dance can’t take any of those things from me!” she wrote. Gilles said she felt some fear criticizing the sport’s governing body - she’d also questioned the judging at last month’s Finlandia Trophy after the technical panel’s scores puzzled most of the figure skating community - but she felt compelled to speak up. “I felt like I needed to state that and let my emotions fly a little bit,” Gilles said in a phone interview with The Canadian Press. “Having my dog comment on another dog, I think that was kind of a humorous play, but I understand how that could have looked bad. “But I am proud about speaking out

and sharing my concern because if no one does it, nothing will change.” As Canada’s top hope for a figure skating medal at the upcoming Milan Cortina Olympics, the stakes are high for Gilles and Poirier as they compete in their 15th and possibly final season. The two-time reigning world silver medalists entered the season with expectations for a podium spot - and a shot at Olympic gold. Now their marks have dipped almost 12 points behind defending world champions Madison Chock and Evan Bates of the United States, and even a medal isn’t a sure thing. Poirier says vying for a place on the Olympic podium is already tough enough without second-guessing the judging system and wondering how the scoring is determined from one event to the next. “The benchmark is always moving,” he said. “Makes it really difficult for us to understand where the room for improvement lies. “The thing that we’re seeking the most, is clarity and consistency across events.” Gilles and Poirier aren’t the only skaters voicing concerns. French Olympic champion Guillaume Cizeron, who won silver at the GP Final with Canadian partner Laurence Fournier Beaudry, also spoke out after their rhythm dance at Finlandia Trophy. “I see some strange games being played that are destroying ice dance,” Cizeron said. “I don’t think I’ve ever been to a competition like this in my career, from a judging standpoint.” Concerns about fairness in ice dance are hardly new. It is figure skating’s most subjective discipline, particularly vulnerable to politics and judging bias. At the 1998 Nagano Olympics, one judge was recorded trying to predetermine the results, and the scandal that initially cost Canadian duo Jamie Salé and David Pelletier gold in 2002 supposedly stemmed from a vote-trading deal between a pairs judge and ice dance judge. That corruption hurt the sport’s credibility and prompted the introduction of a new judging system. Poirier said they’ve received feedback from various officials and have mapped out a “strong strategy” with Skate Canada and their coaches heading into the second half of the season.



Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier, of Canada, compete in the ice dance’s free dance segment at the ISU Grand Prix of Figure Skating Final in Nagoya, central Japan. (AP)

Team needs big reset, says Larocque

Canada’s Olympic gold defense faces stiff test from US



United States' Abbey Murphy (37) checks Canada's Ella Shelton (17) during the second period of Rivalry Series game in Edmonton on Wednesday. (AP)

MONTREAL, Dec 13, (AP): The first hint of concern regarding the readiness of Canada’s women’s hockey team was raised by coach Troy Ryan two days before the defending Olympic champions opened their four-game Rivalry Series against the United States last month. Whatever advantage Canada might have in returning a veteran roster with an edge in international experience isn’t enough to make a difference once the puck drops, Ryan told The Associated Press then. What worried him particularly after a sloppy practice was his players using that experience as a crutch. “Sometimes what happens with experienced teams that have experienced a lot together, complacency can creep in,” he said. “When you have trust in people, a lot of times you trust and trust and trust, and it can end up working against you,” Ryan added. “So, ‘Oh, we’ll be fine. Our passing will get better. We’ll be better come the Olympics,’ I don’t believe in that. ... So that’s the challenge. How do you keep pushing? How do you keep finding ways to improve?” A month and three lopsided losses later, in which the U.S. has outscored Canada by a combined 20-6, Ryan’s concerns haven’t abated. With less than two months before the women’s tournament opens in Milan, questions are being raised about not only complacency, but whether the Canadians have the wherewithal to keep up with their speedier and younger U.S. rivals. “There was a lack of compete,” Ryan said following a 10-4 loss to the Americans in Edmonton, Alberta, on Wednesday. “We had a meeting

this afternoon and it was generally all on compete. And we have to be better competing.” Ryan dismissed questions over whether Canada can compete against its cross-border rivals. “They’ve got a ton of youth. They’ve got a ton of speed. They’ve got a ton of skill,” Ryan said. “It doesn’t mean you can’t be successful against a group like that. But to do it, you’re going to have to compete. You’re going to have to play with structure.” The U.S. now has a 16-14 edge in the series, which began in 2018-19 and has become one of the fiercest rivalries in sports. While series results have previously had little bearing on which nation has the edge in international tournaments, Canada’s performance so far is cause for concern. The 10 goals against were the most the Canadian women have ever allowed to any opponent. With one series game left on Saturday in Edmonton, and players returning to their respective PWHL and college teams to resume their seasons next week, Ryan has limited practice time to make corrections before heading to Italy. “Of course this game is frustrating. But we have one more game against them before the Olympics,” Canadian captain Marie-Philip Poulin said. “These are important games. We didn’t show up. It’s unacceptable. And we’re all aware of it.” The Canadians have the edge in Olympic competition, having won five gold medals to the Americans’ two (1998, 2018). The U.S., however, has closed the gap in world championship

play. Canada still leads with 13 world titles, but the U.S. has won 11, including 10 of the last 14 following a 4-3 overtime win over Canada in the gold-medal game in April. And the tables have turned in the four years since Canada played a breathtaking, up-tempo style to dominate the 2022 Beijing Games. The Canadians finished 7-0 and outscored their opponents by a whopping margin of 57-10. The closest anyone came to beating them was the U.S. in a 3-2 loss in the gold medal game. This time, the Americans appear primed to dominate with a team that features several key holdovers in Hilary Knight, Kendall Coyne Schofield, Alex Carpenter and Lee Stecklein. Coach John Wroblewski has spent the past four years reinforcing his roster with a collection of youngsters such as defenders Caroline Harvey and Laila Edwards, and the goalie tandem of Aerin Frankel and Gwyneth Phillips. Winning three Rivalry Series outings has further motivated the Americans. “The work doesn’t stop,” Coyne Schofield said. “I don’t think you’re ever satisfied until that final game.” For Canada, there’s even more work to do in preparation for an Olympic tournament in which the Czech Republic and Finland are showing signs of catching up to the world’s two dominant powers. “We definitely need to have a big reset and have a plan,” Canadian defender Jocelyne Larocque said. “Right now, we have a choice. We have a choice to learn, to get better, to compete harder, to just play Canadian hockey.”

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Stolz breaks 500m & 1,500m records ahead of Olympics

HAMAR, Norway, Dec 13, (Xinhua): American sensation Jordan Stolz continued his record-breaking run at the ISU World Cup, claiming the men’s 500m and 1,500m gold medals with new track records here on Friday. The 21-year-old arrived in Hamar fresh off a dominant performance last weekend in Heerenveen, the Netherlands, where he secured golds in the 500m, 1,000m, and 1,500m events, setting three new track records in the process. Continuing his momentum, he finished the first 500m race at the Hamar Olym-

pic Hall in 33.97 seconds in the eighth pair with Dutchman Jennings de Boo, who beat Stolz to win the World Championships on the exact same rink in a then track record time of 34.24s. “It’s too many [track record] plaques to fit in my suitcase,” Stolz joked after his victory, as quoted by the ISU official website. “I need to have my mom bring them home.” De Boo also skated faster than his previous mark but settled for silver in 34.21s, with Poland’s Damian Zurek sitting third in 34.42s. In the 1,500m, Stolz again topped the podium,

clocking 1:44.16 for his fifth consecutive track record. The silver medal went to three-time Olympic gold medalist Kjeld Nuis of the Netherlands, who finished just 0.79 seconds behind, while China’s Ning Zhongyan earned bronze in 1:45.11, marking his back-to-back third-place finishes. The women’s 500m race also saw a new track record, with Femke Kok of the Netherlands setting the bar at 37.05 seconds, slicing 0.20 seconds off the previous record held by Japan’s Nao Kodaira since 2019. “I was super happy to skate a track record, be-

cause that was set by Nao and that’s a super-good skater,” said the Dutchwoman, who remained unbeaten over the distance this season. Kaja Ziomek-Nogal of Poland took a silver in 37.65s and Japan’s Yukino Yoshida bagged a bronze in 37.75s. In the women’s 1,500m, Japan’s Olympic champion Miho Takagi claimed her first World Cup gold of the season with a time of 1:54.95. Kazakhstan’s Nadezhda Morozova took silver, just 0.03 seconds behind, while Norway’s Ragne Wiklund secured bronze, 0.23 seconds off the pace.

‘A win for the Arab community’

Kuwait hails Bin Sulayem’s FIA re-election

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Emad Boukhamsin, Chairman of the Kuwait International Automobile Club, has lauded the re-election of Mohammed Bin Sulayem as President of the Fédération Internationale de l’Automobile (FIA), emphasizing that the high percentage of votes he received reflects “the immense trust he commands within the international sports community and his capability to lead one of the world’s largest sports organizations.”

Boukhamsin highlighted that during Bin Sulayem’s first term, “his expertise and extensive connections with sports officials worldwide brought a major transformation to motorsports across all categories and strengthened the Arab world’s influence in global sports decision-making.”

He added that the re-election “is a win for Arabs generally, and for Kuwait specifically,” noting that Kuwait was Bin Sulayem’s starting point in rally racing – a springboard to global recognition – making their relationship historic and deeply rooted.

Following the FIA general assembly, Boukhamsin met with Bin Sulayem and Vice President Essa Hamza to discuss strategies for advancing motorsports in Kuwait. He highlighted the



Bin Sulayem, joined by Boukhamsin and Hamza after his re-election.

country’s assets, including the largest motorsports city in the Gulf, featuring six specialized tracks for diverse racing disciplines.

Bin Sulayem expressed his full support for Kuwait’s upcoming development programs, stressing the importance of “optimally utilizing these world-class facilities to benefit motorsports and mo-

torcycle racing in Kuwait, the Gulf, and the wider Middle East.”

Boukhamsin also extended an invitation for Bin Sulayem to visit Kuwait, where he would meet senior officials at the Amiri Diwan and the Ministry of Youth to explore ways to restore Kuwait’s motorsport scene to its former leading position.

Medical team works to get players match-fit

Al-Murshid back in training as Al-Arabi eyes derby win

By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Al-Qadsia’s Algerian professional, Victor Lekhel, will rejoin training this evening after returning from Doha, Qatar, where he represented Algeria in the Arab Cup. Algeria was eliminated in the quarterfinals after a 6-7 penalty shootout loss to the UAE (1-1).

The domestic league has been on hold since November due to preparations for Kuwait’s national team in the Arab Cup.

Al-Qadsia is gearing up to face Al-Arabi next Wednesday in the ninth round of the Zain Premier League at Mohammed Al-Hamad Stadium. The team currently sits second with 14 points, level on goal difference with third-placed Al-Arabi, while Kuwait Club leads with 19 points. Both Al-Qadsia and Al-Arabi have one postponed match each.



Victor Lekhel in action during a match.

The medical staff is working to get Khaled Sabah, Khaled Ibrahim, and Jassim Al-Mutair match-ready. Ibrahim missed the Arab Cup due to a muscle injury, Sabah was sidelined during the

tournament, and Al-Mutair is recovering from a muscle injury sustained with the Olympic team in the Under-23 Gulf Championship currently in Qatar.

Al-Qadsia continues daily training after canceling a short camp in Tabuk, Saudi Arabia, which was to include a friendly against Neom Club last week, due to a shortage of available players.

Al-Arab’s Khaled Al-Murshid has rejoined training and is ready for the upcoming derby. Sami Al-Awadhi and Ezi Nasari also trained, though their chances of featuring in the derby remain limited.

Meanwhile, Hussein Ashkanani and Bandar Al-Salama continue their rehabilitation programs and will need additional time before returning to full training.

Al-Arabi’s last friendly saw it defeat Al-Salmiya 3-2, marking their final preparation ahead of the derby clash.

Lindsey sets record with 410th World Cup podium



Germany's Emma Aicher, center, winner of an alpine ski, women's World Cup downhill, poses on the podium with second placed United States' Lindsey Vonn, left, and third placed Italy's Sofia Goggia in St. Moritz, Switzerland. (AP)

Meillard leads Swiss sweep

ST. MORITZ, Switzerland, Dec 13, (AP): Lindsey Vonn nearly did it again.

The 41-year-old American finished second in a World Cup downhill on Saturday, a day after becoming the oldest winner in the circuit’s history. It was Vonn’s 140th podium result and it came in a record-breaking 410th World Cup race. Former Austrian skier Renate Götschl held the previous record with 409 races.

After winning the season’s opening downhill by nearly a full second on Friday, Vonn was beaten by only one racer this time: Emma Aicher of Germany was 0.24 seconds faster.

Vonn attributed a mistake landing a jump midway down her run for the gap, when she nearly lost her balance for an instant and leaned heavily on her left leg to raise herself back up.

“I’m a little bit tired from yesterday, there was a lot of emotion,” Vonn told Swiss broadcaster RTS. “I thought I skied pretty well on top then I was just out of balance, I fell on my hip. Yeah, didn’t ski the bottom the way I wanted to.”

Sofia Goggia, the 2018 Olympic champion from Italy, finished third, 0.29 behind, and Breezy Johnson, the American world champion, was fourth, 0.40 back.

Vonn, who is preparing for the Milan Cortina Olympics, went into first position with her run down the sun-drenched Corviglia course. But

the 22-year-old Aicher came down next and quickly pushed Vonn out of the leader’s seat.

Vonn returned to skiing last season after nearly six years of retirement - following a partial replacement surgery on her right knee, which included inserting two pieces of titanium.

Vonn’s results are shaping up to make her a top medal contender at the Olympics - and able to compete with skiers half her age. Women’s Alpine skiing at the Feb. 6-22 Winter Games will be contested at Cortina d’Ampezzo, where Vonn holds the record of 12 World Cup wins.

Vonn registered the top speed of 102.45 kph (64 mph) on the top section; increased her speed to 110.02 kph (68 mph) on the bottom and flew a massive 41 meters (yards) off a jump toward the end of her run.

Vonn also clocked the fastest time in the final sector - a sign of her increased fitness this season. She said earlier this week that she added 12 pounds (5.5 kilograms) of muscle during dry-land training over the summer and followed a rigid diet.

When Vonn crossed the finish line and saw that she was ahead of Goggia, Vonn celebrated thinking that she had won. She let out a scream, punched the air with one of her poles and then raised her arms over her head, shaking her head in apparent disbelief.

It was Aicher’s third World Cup victory and second in downhill. She’s a rare all-around skier capable of being competitive in all four disciplines - like Vonn at the height of her career.

Aicher also finished on the podium in a slalom this season, placing third in Levi, Finland.

Vonn could aim for another victory in a super-G in St. Moritz on Sunday - in a race that fellow American standout Mikaela Shiffrin is also expected to compete in.

Shiffrin has not been racing downhill.

In the men’s event, Swiss skiers Loic Meillard, Luca Aerni and Marco Odermatt swept the podium places in a World Cup giant slalom.

Meillard moved up from fifth after the opening run to win by 0.18 seconds ahead of Aerni and 0.33 ahead of Odermatt, the overall World Cup leader.

Timon Haugan finished fourth and first-run leader Stefan Brennsteiner ended up fifth as the racers struggled to find the racing line when the steep Bellevarde course was mostly covered by shade.

It was Meillard’s eighth World Cup victory and first since winning the giant slalom at last season’s finals in Sun Valley, Idaho.

The Swiss team, which also dominated at last season’s world championships, is shaping up as the squad to beat in men’s skiing at the upcoming Milan Cortina Olympics.

American racer River Radamus had the fastest second run and finished sixth after placing 21st in the morning run. In a solid day for the U.S. Ski Team, Ryder Sarchett placed a career-best 10th.

A slalom race is scheduled for the Bellevarde on Sunday.

Al-Qadsia dominates Al-Sahel

KUWAIT CITY Dec 13: Al-Qadsia thrashed Al-Sahel 130-72 in their clash during the seventh round of the basketball league, which also saw Al-Qurain defeat Al-Arabi 96-75.

With the victory, Al-Qadsia increased its tally to 10 points from six matches, placing fourth, tied with Al-Sulaibikhat, who has the same points. Al-Sahel rose to 8 points in seventh place, while Al-Qurain climbed to third with 11 points, equal to second-placed Kazma. Al-Arabi remains at the bottom with 7 points.

The league is structured in three divisions, with the top four teams advancing to the semifinals. The playoffs feature the first-place team facing the fourth and the second-placed team facing the third in a best-of-three series, with the first team to win two games advancing to the final.



Al-Qadsia player takes a shot during a game.

Kuwait names 25 players for youth volleyball squad

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Kuwait’s national volleyball team coach, Tunisian Mohammed Ali Bin Sheikh, has announced a 25-player preliminary squad for the youth team ahead of upcoming competitions. The team will begin its training camp from January 3 to 15, as part of preparations for the First Division League of the 2025-2026 season.

The selected players are: Bader Bouaraki, Mohammed Al-Dhahabi, Ahmed Al-Sarheed, Khaled Al-Masoud, Ahmed Al-Sanad, Mahdi Ismail, Rashid Al-Naemi, Saad Al-Filqawi, Fahad Gheith, Bandar

Al-Ahmad, Abdulrahman Al-Seif, Yousef Al-Doukhi, Mohammed Al-Doukhi, Abdullah Al-Ali, Mishari Al-Mutawwah, Yousef Al-Khudair, Salem Khaddadah, Suleiman Al-Mutairi, Abdulaziz Al-Obaid, Mishari Al-Hamdan, Mohammed Al-Zoubi, Ahmed Dashti, Mohammed Dashti, Abdulrahman Waleed, and Salem Al-Shammari.

This announcement marks the official launch of a long-term preparation program under coach Bin Sheikh, aiming to equip the youth team with the skills and experience needed for international competitions.



Kuwait national volleyball coach Mohammed Ali Bin Sheikh pictured with an official.

Strong wins for Al-Qadsia and Al-Arabi

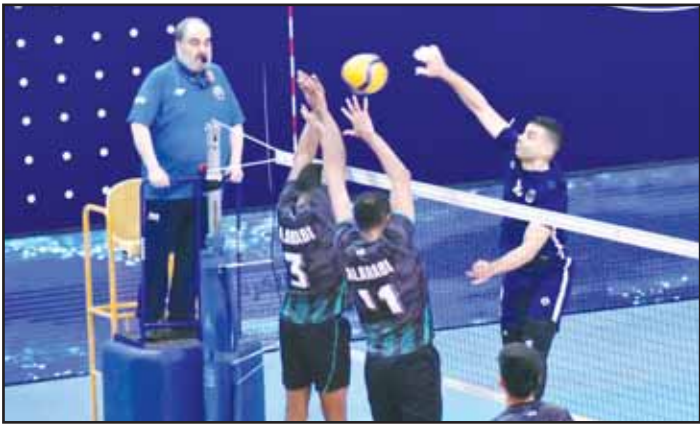
By Hassan Mosa

Al-Seyassah/Arab Times Staff

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: Al-Qadsia and Al-Arabi claimed victories over Al-Shabab and Bargan, respectively, both with identical 3-0 scorelines in the second round of the volleyball league. The tournament began Thursday with Kuwait Club defeating Kazma 3-1 and Al-Sulaibikhat overcoming Al-Nasr 3-0.

These results gave Al-Qadsia, Al-Arabi, Al-Sulaibikhat, and Kuwait Club their first three points of the season, while Kazma, Al-Nasr, Bargan, and Al-Shabab remain without points. Yarmouk and Al-Sahel are set to begin their campaigns tomorrow.

Al-Qadsia dominated their match



Al-Arabi player rushes to block the opponent's spike.

against Al-Shabab, winning the sets 25-18, 25-10, and 25-20. Al-Arabi faced a tougher challenge against Bargan but secured a straight-sets 3-0 win, with scores of 25-23, 25-21, and 25-12.

The league format features an initial single-division stage, with the top six teams advancing to the Premier Division, which is split into three groups. The team with the most wins in this stage claims the championship, while the first-place team in the preliminary round receives an extra victory as an advantage in the next stage. Teams ranked seventh to tenth, along with the youth national team, compete in the First Division, also divided into three groups.

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NEWS



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah sits on the bench before the English Premier League soccer match between Liverpool and Brighton and Hove Albion in Liverpool, England. (AP)

Sports

Kuwaiti drivers sweep podium at Qatar Drift Champ'ship 2nd round



Drivers and officials celebrate the dominant victory.

KUNA photo

DOHA, Dec 13, (KUNA): Competitors from Kuwait's Basil Al-Sabah Car and Motorcycle Racing Club delivered impressive performances in the second round of the Qatar Drift Championship, organized by the Qatar Car and Motorcycle Racing Club at the Drift Circuit.

Kuwaiti drivers dominated the podium, with Ali Muqsaid taking first place, followed by club teammates Mohammed Khorshid in second and Salem Al-Sarraf in third.

Seif Al-Mutairi, Director of Basil Al-Sabah Club, expressed his pride in the results, highlighting the clear Kuwaiti dominance in the second round. He

also voiced confidence in the drivers' ability to continue achieving successes and enhancing the reputation of both the club and Kuwait in regional and international arenas.

Al-Mutairi noted that the first round of the championship, held in October as part of the 2025-2026 season, also saw Salem Al-Sarraf secure third place. He extended his gratitude to the event organizers for their excellent management and hospitality, and to the Public Authority for Sports for its ongoing support of the drivers.

The Qatar Drift Championship consists of five rounds, with the final round scheduled for April.

Kuwait handball team continues preparations in Cairo

KUWAIT CITY, Dec 13: The Kuwait handball team, "Al-Azraq," is continuing its training camp in Cairo at the Dr. Hassan Mostafa Hall in 6th of October City as part of preparations for the upcoming Asian Championship, set to begin on January 15 in Kuwait.

Under the leadership of Icelandic coach Aron Kristiansson, with assistance from coach Heini Janssen, the team has intensified its training schedule, holding two sessions per day — one in the morning and one in the evening. The focus is on improving physical conditioning, enhancing fitness, and boosting endurance.

The training camp will wrap up on December 21, followed by two friendly matches against Egypt's national team.

The team will then travel to Croatia for a final phase of international preparation, aiming to refine tactics and finalize the squad ahead of the Asian Championship.



Players intensify their training in Cairo.

Best of the Rest

UAE and Jordan advance to semifinals: The UAE national football team qualified for the semi-finals of the Arab Cup (FIFA Qatar 2025) after defeating Algeria 7-6 in a penalty shootout in their quarter-final match at Education City Stadium in Doha.

The first half ended goalless, before Algeria took the lead early in the second half through Adel Boulbina in the 46th minute. The UAE responded with an equalizer by Bruno Oliveira in the 64th minute, sending the match into extra time. Both additional periods ended without further goals, and the UAE prevailed 7-6 in the penalty shootout to secure their place in the last four.

Algeria were eliminated from the tournament, which continues until December 18.

The semi-final matches will be played on Monday, with the UAE set to face Morocco, while Jordan will take on Saudi Arabia.

Jordan also booked their place in the semi-finals after edging Iraq 1-0 in their quarter-final clash. The only

goal of the match came from the penalty spot in the 41st minute.(KUNA)

□ □ □

Ex-Chelsea midfielder Oscar set to retire: Sao Paulo midfielder Oscar has decided to retire from professional football after being diagnosed with heart problems, according to Brazilian media reports.

The 34-year-old informed people close to him of his decision not to risk further complications following an incident that left him in intensive care last month, Globo Esporte said.

Oscar returned to Sao Paulo, his boyhood club, on a three-year deal last December after successful spells with Chelsea and Shanghai Port. Injuries, including a lumbar fracture in July, limited him to 21 matches this year, in which he scored two goals and provided five assists.

The former Brazil international is expected to meet Sao Paulo officials in the coming days to seek the termination of a contract that runs until 2027. Sao Paulo is understood to be considering offering him an off-field role. (Xinhua)

Fans throw bottles, Messi's India tour gets off to tumultuous start



Indian fans vandalize stadium chairs as they run on to the field after failing to get a glimpse of Argentine soccer star Lionel Messi at the Salt Lake Stadium, in Kolkata, India. (AP)

KOLKATA, India, Dec 13, (AP): Lionel Messi's much-hyped tour of India got off to a rocky start Saturday with angry fans throwing bottles and attempting to vandalize a stadium after many of them failed to get more than just a glimpse of their hero.

The Times of India reported that many ticket-holders said that they failed to see Messi at all - either in person or on the stadium's big screens - despite waiting for hours.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee apologized to the Argentine soccer star for the "mismanagement" of the event.

"I am deeply disturbed and shocked by the mismanagement witnessed today at Salt Lake Stadium," Banerjee wrote on social media, where she also apologized to fans who had expected more after paying for tickets.

Banerjee said a committee would be constituted to "conduct a detailed enquiry into the incident, fix responsibility, and recommend measures to prevent such occurrences in the future."

Messi's three-day "GOAT India Tour" was to bring the World Cup winner from Kolkata to Hyderabad and then Mumbai before concluding in New Delhi on Monday. He was joined by longtime teammates Luis Suárez and Rodrigo De Paul.

Earlier Saturday, Messi remotely "unveiled" a 21-meter (70-foot) statue of himself in Kolkata.

Alonso under pressure

Injury-hit Madrid faces Alaves

MADRID, Dec 13, (Xinhua): Real Madrid coach Xabi Alonso's job looks to be on the line when he takes his side to play Deportivo Alaves on Sunday where he will have to field a makeshift defense in what is arguably his most important game since taking charge.

Wednesday's 2-1 defeat at home to Manchester City left Alonso on the brink of the sack after a run of poor displays and results amid stories of dressing room division.

Although nobody could accuse the Real Madrid players of not giving everything against City, they did miss chances to take a draw, and the team was booed off the pitch after suffering consecutive home defeats following last weekend's 2-0 loss at home to Celta Vigo.

Last weekend's defeat has an important effect on Sunday, after full-backs Fran Garcia and Alvaro Carreras were both sent off, while striker Endrick was shown a red card while protesting from the dugout, meaning all three are suspended.

Garcia and Carreras' red cards are especially significant given that Ferland Mendy is out injured, leaving Alonso without a left-back, although David Alaba or Dean Huijsen could cover.

Meanwhile, injuries to Trent Alexander-Arnold and Dani Carvajal also mean Madrid is without a specialist right-back, meaning Fede Valverde may have to play there despite his well-known aversion to the role.

Eder Militao's hamstring injury means he will be out for several months and an ankle problem deprives Alonso of Eduardo Camavinga's services.

However, there is one injury that will worry Alonso more than any of the above: Kylian Mbappe didn't play against Manchester City after feeling a muscle twinge - he also has a broken finger - and the fact Alonso chose not to risk his top scorer as Real Madrid was looking for an equalizer implies the striker does have a problem.

Mitchell scores 24 of 48 points in 4th to rally Cavaliers past Wizards

Curry scores 39 in return but Timberwolves top Warriors

WASHINGTON, Dec 13, (AP): Donovan Mitchell scored 24 of his 48 points in the fourth quarter, leading the Cleveland Cavaliers back from a 15-point deficit in the final period to a 130-126 victory over the Washington Wizards.

The Cavaliers went 15 of 53 from 3-point range, with Darius Garland going 0 for 11, but Mitchell connected from long range to tie the game at 122. Then he put Cleveland ahead to stay, scoring inside with 60 seconds remaining.

With the Cavaliers still up 124-122, Washington's Marvin Bagley III rebounded a miss, but Mitchell tied him up, forcing a jump ball. The 6-foot-11 Bagley has 8 inches on Mitchell, but both players mistimed their jumps and Lonzo Ball came up with possession for Cleveland. He made two free throws with 30.9 seconds left.

Mitchell's layup with 5.9 seconds to play put the Cavaliers up by six.

Timberwolves 127, Warriors 120

In San Francisco, Rudy Gobert had 24 points and 14 rebounds, Donte DiVincenzo made a clutch 3-pointer with 28 seconds remaining and the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the Golden State Warriors.

Stephen Curry scored 39 for the Warriors after missing the previous five games with a bruised left quadriceps, but Minnesota held on even without injured star Anthony Edwards (right foot soreness).

DiVincenzo finished with 21 points, six rebounds and four assists in the first meeting between the teams since the Timberwolves eliminated the Warriors in the second round of the playoffs last season.

Julius Randle had 27 points, nine rebounds and six assists for Minnesota. Naz Reid added 18 points and seven assists off the bench.

Quinten Post scored 16 points for Golden State. Jimmy Butler had 15 points and eight rebounds.

The game featured 27 lead changes, tied for second-most in the NBA this season, and both teams played short-handed. The Timberwolves were without Edwards, while the Warriors were missing injured Draymond Green.

Mavericks 119, Nets 111

In Dallas, Anthony Davis scored 20 of his 24 points in the second half to go with 14 rebounds and three blocks, and Cooper Flagg had 22 points and eight assists as the Dallas Mavericks rallied to beat the Brooklyn Nets.

The Mavericks (10-16) have won



Indiana Pacers' Pascal Siakam, left, drives to the basket against Philadelphia 76ers' Dom Barlow, right, during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Philadelphia. (AP)

five of their last six games and two straight at home for the first time this season. Naji Marshall scored 17 points.

Michael Porter Jr. had 34 to lead the Nets (6-18), who had won three of four following a 3-16 start. Porter has scored at least 30 points in four consecutive games for the first time in his seven-year NBA career.

Brooklyn rookie Danny Wolf added 17 points, 12 in the second half. Nic Claxton had 14 points and 10 rebounds.

76ers 115, Pacers 105

In Philadelphia, Joel Embiid scored a season-high 39 points, Paul George had 23 and the Philadelphia 76ers beat the Indiana Pacers.

VJ Edgecombe added 22 points for the 76ers, who played without Tyrese Maxey - the NBA's third-leading scorer (31.5 points per game) sat out with an illness.

Pascal Siakam had 20 points for the defending Eastern Conference champion Pacers, who dropped to 6-19.

Siakam's jumper with 8:24 remaining gave Indiana a 100-95 lead, but the Pacers missed nine consecutive shots - including three 3-pointers - after that as the 76ers went on a 13-2 run. The spurt was capped with Embiid's offensive rebound and follow basket. The 2023 MVP was fouled on the play and made the free throw to push Philadelphia's lead to 108-102.

Embiid, the seven-time All-Star who has been beset with injuries the last 1 1/2 seasons, came in averaging 18.2 points while playing in just nine of Philadelphia's 23 contests due to left and right knee issues. However, he looked more like himself on Friday, hitting a step-back 3-pointer at the first-half buzzer to give him 14 points inn the second quarter.

Philadelphia improved to 6-4 with Embiid in the lineup.

Pistons 142, Hawks 115

In Detroit, Isaiah Stewart scored 17 points to lead a balanced scoring attack as the Detroit Pistons beat the Atlanta Hawks.

Detroit, which has won five of six, had seven players in double figures and 12 with at least seven points, tying an NBA record held by the 2018-2019 Bucks and 2021-22 Spurs. Cade Cunningham had 15 points and seven assists.

Jalen Johnson recorded his third straight triple-double, finishing with 19 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists. It was his fifth triple-double of the season, breaking Bill Bridges' franchise record from 1969-70, and the seventh of his career, tying Mookie Blaylock's team record.

Jazz 130, Grizzlies 126

In Memphis, Keyonte George

scored a career-high 39 points, including the final six points for Utah, as the Jazz beat Memphis in Ja Morant's return to the Grizzlies' lineup.

The score was tied at 126 with just under a minute left when George hit a 22-footer to put Utah ahead for good. He converted two more free throws with 6.8 seconds left for the final margin as the Jazz snapped a two-game skid.

Lauri Markkanen had 26 points and nine rebounds, and Kevin Love added 20 - including 13 in the third quarter - as the Jazz stayed within striking distance. George also had eight assists.

Santi Aldama scored 22 points to lead Memphis, and Morant - who missed the previous 10 games with a right calf sprain - added 21 points and 10 assists. Cam Spencer finished with 20, including making all six of his 3-pointers.

Bulls129, Hornets 126

In Charlotte, Josh Giddey had 26 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds, Zach Collins added 16 points off the bench and the Chicago Bulls erased a 13-point, second-half deficit to beat the Charlotte Hornets and snap a seven-game losing streak.

Coby White had 20 points including two free throws to seal the game as all five Chicago starters finished in double figures in scoring.